The Children's Covenant

C. V. ANTHONY

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THE CHILDREN'S COVENANT

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PREFACE.

WHATEVER may be said about the needless multiplication of books, there is real occasion for more literature on the subject treated in this little volume. The importance of the theme seems to be in inverse proportion to the books found written to promote it. Books on the training of children in religion are scarce in America. Is there no need of helps for parents, teachers in Sunday-schools, and pastors, in the greatest responsibility that rests upon them? Ought there not to be a text-book in the course of ministerial instruction on the practical bearings of this subject? The writer ventures to give some thoughts to the public

on a subject that has been growing in importance in his mind during a long experience in the ministry. If it shall be helpful in the line intended, or if it shall provoke to a better work, he will be most thankful, and very amply paid.

C. V. A.

San Francisco, Cal., 1901.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	Introductory,	9
II.	The Covenant,	16
III.	God's Covenant, or Bible Testimony,	31
IV.	The Family Covenant,	45
V.	The Church,	104
VI.	The Ministry,	166
VII.	Methodist Discipline,	203
VIII.	Possibilities,	232

The Children's Covenant.

Chapter I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It is a frequent objection to Christanity on the part of its enemies that it has failed in its mission. After nineteen centuries only part of the world is Christian even in name. Then among Christian nations how many are utterly unworthy of the name! The answer is not difficult. Christianity as a system of saving truth can not justly be held responsible for the state of things among nations who have never heard of it, or having heard, have not had time or opportunity to test its value. We must remember that evangelical Christianity has not been since the Apostolic age decidedly a missionary religion until quite recent times, nor very earnest about it then. When nations professing Christianity shall spend one-half as

much on missions as they now spend on war, or one-half as much as they spend on vice, the very term heathen will soon be only of use in treating the history of the past.

But this discussion is apart from our theme. We turn to consider that point of the objection which is based on the limited extent to which Christianity seems to affect the lives and characters of those who are found in nominally Christian countries. Why are not all those who are born and reared in Christian lands, and have heard the gospel from childhood, exemplary Christians? The answer to this question has an important bearing upon the subject we have in hand. Let us consider it carefully.

1. The principles of this religion are essentially antagonistic to the usual course of the world. Men's tastes, their habits, their pleasures, their worldly and selfish interests, all unfit them for a ready and cordial reception of the truth. We can not stop to inquire why it is so. but simply to point to the fact which all

must concede, that it is so, and always has been so. The truth as it is in Jesus has ever to lift against the gravity of human nature. It is still an axiom of Christian doctrine that "The friendship of the world is enmity towards God." Is it any wonder that in a conflict like this many should yield to their lower nature and live beneath their privilege?

2. Again, the work of God on human hearts does not and can not annul man's moral agency. The power to choose the right or wrong is ever his greatest responsibility and his most sublime opportunity. He can reject the truth and turn away from Christ at any step of human life. To have made him otherwise would have been to rob him of his most glorious birthright, and make him a mere machine. It would take from him the image of God and make him at best a creature of fate. While Christianity operates in accordance with the law of God it must often suffer defeat in individual cases. Yet we shall see that these

defeats may be reduced to a small fraction of what they now are if proper measures are adopted in the training of children. It must suffice here to say that it can not be right to charge Christianity with the failure of those who refuse to use it according to the plain teaching of the Word of God.

3. We must never forget that each generation starts out as a new field for Christian work. Christian progress can not be by accumulation. The same or similar agencies which make one generation of saints must be continued if we would raise up another. The children of Christian parents are no more intrinsically Christian, than are the children of heathen parents, until the former by personal choice become linked with the Divine plan of salvation. Christian parents can only expect their children to become Christian upon the same conditions that heathen children can become such also. The advantages of being born and brought up in a Christian land, and they

are great, and ought to be much greater, lie in the superior character of the moral and educational influences there brought to bear on the minds of children in the period of greatest impressibility. Thus the work of evangelizing the world can never be finished. There never can be such a millennium of Christianity as will allow the Church to sit down and do nothing but watch the even flow of Christian life permeating the hearts of all who are born into the world. Human nature would have to be a very different thing from what it now is before such a consummation could occur.

Now from this standpoint our vision is opened to the greatest possible problem of Christianity. Let the case be fairly stated. Christ came into the world to save it by a sacrifice of himself. He made it possible that God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus Christ. The value of this salvation to each individual soul depends upon personal acceptance and co-operation. To se-

cure this end there must be instruction and influence. Hence a sacrifice of service. "The work of faith and labor of love" is just as essential as the atonement, though not by any means in the same sense or measure.

This raises the most important question the Church can possibly consider. When and how can this work be best applied by the followers of their Master? There can be but one answer to this question. It must be by the right training of children in the great truths of the gospel. This answer exactly accords with the judgment of wise men in all ages of the world. But while this conclusion seems to be universally accepted, it is by no means so universally acted upon. Is it too much to say that no truth in possession of the Church is so carelessly treated? While constantly quoting,

"Just as the twig is bent, the tree 's inclined,"

our efforts to bend the twig are weak and vacillating. This is especially true of the American

Protestant Church. Even formal, unevangelical European Churches do better in this respect than we. There is not only a dearth of instruction for children, there is also a great want of helps for parents and ministers. Not only instruction but inspiration is greatly needed on this subject. Is it not time to awake? We propose carefully to review this whole subject in the following pages, not as elaborately as might be, but as much so as will make the subject practical and profitable. It is hoped that parents, pastors, and Sunday-school workers may be benefited by such an elementary work.

Chapter II.

THE COVENANT.

A COVENANT is a contract, an agreement. Certain things therein are promised on certain conditions therein named. God made a special covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with Jacob, and many others. Under the New Testament dispensation he has made a covenant with every man. He has promised forgiveness and eternal happiness to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In a sense he has made a covenant with everything that lives. The tree is a promised possibility contained in the seed. The ideal tree is only realized by certain conditions of soil, light, heat, and moisture. Under proper environment the seed will produce the tree, and the tree will produce the seed again. This law

is as certain as that of gravity or of any of the physical forces. So reliable is it that our Savior pointed to it as proof of certain great truths in the spiritual kingdom. "Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?" The same law is found in the animal world. No amount of kind treatment or fond petting can take danger out of the nature of a tiger. Nor can any amount of training put danger into the nature of a sheep. With all the variations we can put into environment of life about us, but slight and slow are the changes we can produce. Why is it not so in man? But here we find the most wonderful divergencies of character. At the head of the animal world, the glory and crown of creative power, we can see two men made after the same pattern, having the same organs of mind and body, yet one is a Christian saint, and the other a heathen cannibal. Still more wonderful, the second can be changed into the first by the power of God. Grace has many times wrought just such a change. Ought we

not to believe that human beings should attain the ideal of God's plan as certainly as do his inferior creatures? Is not creation a pledge and promise of an attainment that only disregard of God's law can frustrate? Ought there not to be certainty in the moral world no less than in the natural? Is it not absolutely true that, if we "train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it?"

This idea that God has a plan in the development of a child, which becomes a pledge and promise of a character certain to be realized if conditions are met, is too important to be passed without further consideration. Cause and effect are just as applicable in the moral world as in the natural. Habits of thinking, habits of speaking, and habits of acting, are but the results of continued application. These are called "ways" in the Bible, and the word is significant of the process. We make paths and roads by repeatedly passing over the same

places. We reach the rigidity of a fixed character by a similar process. It is not true that we do not know how a man will act in a given instance. In the highest types of character we are certain how a man will act when subjected to temptation he has long resisted. The history of man furnishes numberless examples of men who would not betray the right in the face of flaming fagots. On the other hand, we know that base men will yield to temptation whenever the opportunity occurs to do so. The reason why men so often disappoint us is that their character is mixed. Their morals are like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image—part of iron and part of clay—not consistent, not wholly of the right material. The reason why there are so many unreliable men in the world is because so few are trained from infancy as they ought to be. Their parents are at fault, their teachers are at fault, their associations are at fault. All these causes often combine to destroy one who otherwise might

have been one of the noblest of earth's inhabitants. There is a constant tendency in human character towards permanence. Habits are always more easily changed in youth than in mature years, and more easily changed in middle life than in old age. Christians rarely backslide late in life, while wicked men, even with the help of grace, seldom reform after the age of fifty. Even the disposition to change frequently in opinions and practices is itself a habit formed, and one greatly to be deplored. Thus men may become unstable as water, and, as a consequence, never excel at anything.

Heaven itself, if a place, is a place of certainty, not a home of necessity. It is not a place walled in, from which there is no egress. Even the figurative New Jerusalem had its twelve gates of pearl always open. If a soul wanted to wander away, presumably he might do so, though from a point nearest the eternal throne of God. If heaven were offered to the lost spirits in perdition, not one of them would

take it. There would be nothing there in accord with the character they had formed. The same law of choice that ruled in the formation of their character here would decide their choice of associations there. The rich man did not wish to be taken to Abraham's bosom; he only wanted to have consequences of conduct mitigated. This is just what we see all around us. Men do not desire to be saved from their sins, else it were easily granted. They only desire to be saved from the consequences of their sins, an impossibility even to eternal goodness. So God has marked on everything around us the law of fixedness. It is, after all, only the eternal law of order. Now the great formative period for this fixedness is in youth. Here the impress of cause is the most easily secured, here the effect is the most enduring.

But suppose early training has been neglected. Suppose evil habits have been formed. No difference if they are not the worst in human character, only so that they are con-

trary to God's plan; then suppose that in later years the man sees the error of his way, repents, reforms, and infinite mercy saves him. Is it all made right? Is it as though he had never sinned? Some say so, yet without reason or Scripture. It is quite as reasonable, but not one whit more so, as to suppose a drunkard, who had lost a limb as a consequence of his habit, should have it restored by becoming a temperate man. It is just as reasonable, and not one whit more so, as to suppose a young man who had by sin neglected his education, should instantly become learned by giving his heart to God. Sin means loss, missing the mark, an eternal mistake. Grace itself can only remove the guilt and stain; the defects, the scars, must endure forever. From such a view we may catch a glimpse of the importance of beginning right and continuing right to the end.

Take another look at this question. Children have rights—God-given rights. These

rights are sealed to them by promises in the Word. They will be considered further on. These rights have been well set forth in the following words clipped from the *Christian Advocate.* The writer's name was not given. His words anticipate points enlarged upon in future chapters, but they are weighty and wise, and it will pay all readers carefully to ponder them:

"Much is said about the duties of children, but little is thought of their rights. Their duties are often strictly enforced upon them, but their rights are frequently ignored. Sometimes this takes place because of ignorance, but chiefly for want of thought. Many parents who desire the highest good of their children, and are willing to make any reasonable sacrifice for them, pay but little attention to their highest rights. Perhaps they do not recognize them as rights at all.

"That children have a right to the support and education which their parents are able to

give them, few will deny. If children should be religious, it must be the duty of parents to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If this be so, it must be the duty of parents to take the time necessary for this important work. Can the pressure of business excuse any father from spending sufficient time at home with his children to teach them the Word of the Lord and train them up in the fear of God? Will the social demands of the age justify a mother in neglecting her children? Can parents turn the religious education and training of their children over to Sunday-school teachers and be prepared to answer for them in the last day?

"If it is the duty of parents to train their children for the kingdom of God, is it not their duty also to see to it that they shall not be burdened with lessons in school and out of school, so that there is no time left for this great work? Have children no rights which the State is bound to respect? Shall parents

stand by in silence and allow their children to be burdened with work which makes religious education impossible and make no protest? Not a few children have no time to attend religious service in the house of God except on Sunday. Many of them have no opportunity to hear religious instruction at home because of a pressure of school work. What becomes of the rights of the children in this case? Who shall protect and defend the rights of the children if parents do not? The welfare of the State depends more on the moral and religious training of the children than on their intellectual training, yet the State makes no provision for their moral and religious training. In some cases it makes it difficult, or impossible, for them to secure such training. In deference to the views of infidels, atheists, and others the Bible is cast out of the public schools, and all school books are stripped bare of everything that might tend to build up and strengthen moral character, and the children's time and strength

taxed to the utmost with secular studies. What becomes of the rights of the children in this state of affairs?

"Children have a right to the companionship of their parents. The obligations of fathers to their children are the highest obligations. They can not be set aside for others which are not so important. If parents have no time to spend at home with their children, something is wrong. The first duty of every father is in his home. The father who spends much time with his children, delights in their society and their sports, can bind them to him with a chain of gold and ever after influence them in almost any direction he may choose.

"Children have a right to a noble manly and womanly example and character in their parents. They learn early to look upon God as a Father. If they see in their earthly father nothing but selfishness, unkindness, injustice, and hardness, they will turn away, not from him only, but from their Heavenly Father

also. If parents knew how much their example and spirit have to do with the religious life and faith of their children, would they not watch and pray daily that they might walk in wisdom toward their own?

"In an excellent volume on 'Christian Nurture' Horace Bushnell has a chapter on 'The Treatment that Discourages Piety,' in which he points out the various ways in which parents unintentionally discourage their children in their early attempts to live a godly life. Surely children have enough discouragements in their own natural hearts and in this wicked world without having an added discouragement from their own parents. They have a right to encouragement from their parents. They need it. It is a part of the Divine economy of the family life that they should have it. They love approbation. They are stimulated to meritorious endeavor by words of encouragement and approval, especially from their parents. If these are withheld, if in their stead

they receive only censure, criticism, reproof, and harsh treatment, or neglect, they are disappointed, discouraged, and defeated in their worthy efforts to live well.

"As a rule, children are not restrained unduly by their parents in this day. The danger lies in the opposite direction. Abdication of authority on the part of the parents and overindulgence of the children are the curse of many a home. This is an age of training. Young people are being trained for almost everything. No one can hope to command the respect of the people whom he serves, or achieve success in his calling, without thorough training for his special work. There is one department of life, and that the most important of all, for which there is no training-school. Who has ever been trained for the holy office of parent? Men and women are trained for teachers, physicians, lawyers, ministers, soldiers, engineers, pilots, and almost every calling and sphere, but no one is trained for father-

hood or motherhood. Is it not time that fathers and mothers should make their holy calling a special study?

"What the Church needs, what the country needs, are fathers and mothers who know the obligations of their position, recognize the rights as well as the duties of their children, and hold themselves ready to defend and maintain those rights at any cost."

We conclude this chapter with the thought that there need be little or no other danger to the child than that which grows out of defective training. God's covenant for good covers all else. This is an astounding truth. We ought to stand before it in profound amazement. We ought to read in it our most sublime responsibility. Children are placed in the hands of parents to be made in the image of their Creator. The means are within their reach that will almost surely secure that result. We need not put in the word "almost" if all men were wise and good. But with all the draw-

backs growing out of the condition of the world about us, parents will rarely fail if true to their heavenly calling. The subject will now be considered from the following points of view: God's will concerning the children as seen in his Word; his will as seen in the possibilities of the family relation; his will as seen in the possible work of the Church.

Chapter III.

GOD'S COVENANT, OR BIBLE TESTIMONY.

To KNOW the mind of God in reference to the claims of children we must turn to his written Word for instruction. And here it will be well to notice the influence of the Old Testament on the people who have made it their only revelation through so many generations. Among the Jewish race we find, even in our day, a striking manifestation of love and care for childhood. The family bond is rarely found elsewhere in such marked degree. The Chinese are doubtless most like them in this respect. See in either case what persistence of ideas, how hard to bring about a change! In the former case, see also what peculiar excellence has marked their character.

Let prejudice say its very worst, the Jews are a wonderful people. Would that Christians might study the Book acknowledged by both as Divine, for inspiration and instruction on this important subject.

Abraham, ever held in such high esteem by the Jews, was made the friend of God and taken into the secret counsels of the Most High, because it was seen that he would do his duty by his children. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken concerning him."

Moses, the great lawgiver, was a remarkable illustration of what may be done in childhood to determine the character of a man in mature years. It was comparatively a short time that his mother could teach him the religion of his people, but "all the learning of the Egyptians" could never erase it from his mind. When he

was forty years of age, in the very maturity of a sound mind, he chose the people that were oppressed and persecuted rather than "the treasures of Egypt."

When the law of the Passover was fixed, it was carefully provided that this ceremony should have its due weight on the minds of children. God knew how naturally parents put off the work of instructing their children, waiting for riper years when they foolishly think it will be time enough; so he instructed Moses to say, "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage; and it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast; therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. And

it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes; for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt." Here we see the value of the spectacular in religion. By its use the Roman and Greek Catholics get an enduring hold upon their followers. Protestants may well reject the errors these ceremonies convey; but are there not other ways of producing impressions that may contain truth?

In Deuteronomy we find these words of authority: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons, specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach

them to their children." The same duty is enjoined yet more emphatically in another chapter of the same book: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." These teachings may be followed through the historical, poetical, and prophetical books of this ancient record. The lesson is taught by inference from example, by direct instruction, by the judgments pronounced on those who failed in duty, and by wise sayings declared. But we turn to the New Testament.

The most important teaching of our Savior in regard to the claims of childhood may be found in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Let us note the following points:

1. In answer to the question, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" he points

to a little child, not as absolutely the greatest, but as a specimen of what the kingdom of heaven involves. They were to look down, not up, if they would be truly great in this kingdom. It was by the way of humility, not by the way of ambitious aspirations, that they could hope to be great in the estimation of God. But if we are to become like little children to be members of the kingdom of heaven, it must be true that they are members already. They must also be great in his sight. This conclusion is made more clear by the lesson that follows:

2. The Savior shows the estimate in which he holds these little ones, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." Could language more forcibly convey the thought that it is indescribably pleasing in the eyes of our blessed Lord that we should gather these little ones into his fold, instruct them in the things of God, and thus make them acquainted with their loving Savior?

3. Then follows a warning. Let us carefully heed it: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Some have supposed that because the expression is used, "which believe in me," that this statement pertains not to children, but to such as are capable of exercising an intelligent faith. Such a view robs the words of their most beautiful and suggestive meaning, while it utterly misapplies the remark. Jesus was talking of children, "little children," also styled "little ones," and there is nothing in his language to indicate a transition to any other class of persons. But see what he really meant, for on that meaning rests a practical lesson of faith. These little ones came to him; they were not afraid of him. He took them up in his arms, and they lovingly lay in his bosom. Suspicion was written on the faces of nearly all of those with whom he

had intercourse. Even the apostles were vacillating in their faith. How gratefully the loving Savior accepted the faith of these little children! Here was faith, genuine faith. Not an apprehension of what or who he was—this is not now necessarily a saving form of faith—but a trust, a fearless trust, a consciousness that in his arms they were safe. Is not this saving faith evermore? How fortunate that Jesus used it as he did! How unfortunate that we should seek to evade the true significance of the remark! How our hearts go out to the precious Shepherd of Israel as we thus conceive of him receiving these little ones and drinking in the joy that came from reading the love they bore him, as seen in the smiles that brightened their faces! Christians, he is the same to-day as he was then, and when we receive them as he would were he present in bodily form, surely we are receiving him.

But what is meant by the words, "Whoso shall offend?" The New Revision has it,

"cause to stumble;" that is, put a cause of stumbling in their way; cause them to fall in the way, or be turned out of it. How his indignation burns at the thought! Better that a large millstone were hanged about the man's neck and he thrown into the sea. Better cut off a right hand, than lead them astray. Better cut off the right foot, than to walk before them to destroy by bad example. Better pluck out a right eye, than to look upon them as of little worth.

But the warning is continued, "Take heed how ye despise one of these little ones." Can we despise them more effectually than by considering them of too little importance to give attention to all their wants? To deny them a place in the Church, to neglect their spiritual and moral culture, to underestimate the value of their early aspirations toward God, can any form of despising them be more effectual than this? Can any harm be greater in the sight of God?

4. The next point shows that it was not mere sentiment that led to these utterances. It was not merely the oversanguine love of children that made him say it. He came into the world "to show us God." He proceeds to indicate how the Father feels toward these little ones. The statement he makes here is among the most remarkable of all his sayings. Nor does he say it carelessly, as though not weighing his words. He speaks with deliberateness and especial emphasis, "For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Kings and kingdoms may rise and fall, discoveries may be made that fill the world with wonder, battles may be fought and victories won that turn the destinies of nations, but would we know what takes the precedence of all cares and thoughts in the mind of God? There is no escape from the conclusion—the children. Their prayers, their messengers, their cry for help, these, none of them, are

ever put aside for more important matters. Their interests have the right of way always to the throne of Infinite Glory. How terrible the mistake of the man who thinks himself too great to engage in the instruction of children! What sort of a report will such a man make, by and by, when he stands before the Judge of all?

5. These words are all applicable to the salvation of children. They culminate on that point. This is in accord with his own explanation, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." For this he left the ninety and nine, the multitudes in heaven who were safe, and came into this little wilderness world to save the one that had wandered away, or was in danger of wandering away forever. This is the manner of his closing this lesson, the most important and most wonderful of all his lessons, "Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

An emphasis is put on the foregoing by the often-quoted incident in the Gospel by Mark: The mothers brought "young children to Christ that he should touch them," the utmost they dared to hope he would do for them. But his disciples no doubt thought: "What can these know about the teachings of the Master? Why should he be hindered in his great work by such trifles?" And so they "rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased [a strong word is used in Greek, much better rendered in the New Revision, 'was moved with indignation'], and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And then, reiterating the teachings already considered, he added: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." He still receives the children, and the Church

ought to bring them, in the most appropriate manner possible, for his blessing.

Peter, who had been given the first charge from his Divine Master, "Feed my lambs," remembered his duty in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, at the first founding of the real Christian Church, by saying to the repentant Jews who were seeking the way of life, "The promise is unto you and to your children." That promise was the gift and work of the Holy Spirit. As it had enlightened their eyes, and had enabled them to see their privilege in the gospel, so it was for their help in teaching and saving their children. This is an important truth. Who can say how early that Spirit can co-operate in teaching and saving the children? John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."

Paul, whose soul was in such intimate relation with God, did not consider it beneath him to say a few words to the children in an epistle, that of the Ephesians (vi, 1-3), which

deals with the profoundest problems of the Christian faith. We may be sure he did not fail to preach to children when he fed the flock of God. Much more might be said on this subject, but this is sufficient for all who accept the authority of the Word of God.

Chapter IV.

THE FAMILY COVENANT.

The family is the oldest social organization on the face of the earth. It can never cease to exist while humanity remains. Out of the family ideas of government are evolved. The primitive government was only a complicated family with a patriarch for a common father. A king was a natural outgrowth of this plan. A kingly government would still be best if kings could certainly be secured wise enough, with goodness and self-abnegation large enough perfectly to carry out the paternal conception. It is selfishness and earthly ambition which drive us to expedients, safer indeed for the citizen, but less efficient than an ideal monarchy. It is because political power is so easily and naturally abused that we are forced to such a diffusion of it as greatly to mar its efficiency.

Looking again at the family, we find in it the possibility of the most delightful of all social compacts. The love of one husband for one wife is the ideal of earthly sentiment. It moves our profoundest emotions. It finds expression in poetry, song, and romance as no other subject ever has found, or can find. Then the relations of parents and children, how they move our affections and control our lives! When the sands of time are well-nigh run, age lives again in the children that early manhood so faithfully cherished. See, also, in the perversions of this relation, and the evils visited upon those whose family government was defective, the marked punishment of God for neglect of duty. How affecting the thought that a child, the object of so much love and care, the subject of so much hope and ambition, may bring down the gray hairs of a parent to the grave in the most abject of sorrows!

Then, too, the love of brothers and sisters

presents a sight, when properly considered, of the most unselfish devotion and the most unalloyed pleasure to be found short of heaven. The psalmist saw it, and said, "How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" If there is a hell on earth, it is where brethren dwell together in mutual envy and hatred.

Now we may be certain that it is God's will that great happiness should be experienced in every household on earth. That it is not gained in a great many cases, even among Christians, must be conceded; also, that only in rare cases is it as perfect as it ought to be; but we should be careful not to question the Divine plan on that account. It is not often that God has his way in the conduct of men. If he had, the ideal would far more frequently become the actual. Every home might be, and would be, a heaven on earth if God reigned supreme in the hearts of all its members.

"Train up a child in the way he should go,

and when he is old he will not depart from it." This is a law of God as certain as any other. We shall have occasion to see, in the further discussion of this subject, why even Christian parents so often fail in reaching the desired result. The duty of parents is one of many complications. It needs and ought to have the gravest attention. The responsibility of parentage is doubtless one of the greatest known on earth. It involves eternal consequences. Viewed by the writer from the standpoint of old age, he can feel, what ought to have been more intensely felt in the years when a helpless family depended upon his training, how prayerfully, how studiously, how wisely, he ought to have entered upon the work second to none in importance. Is it not true that a majority of parents enter on these duties with little concern? Is it any wonder that so many fail, or at most make but a partial success? It is hoped that the suggestions of the following sections may be of help to any parents who

will read this book. It is taken for granted, all through this chapter, that the reader is a Christian; but if this book falls into the hands of others, it is hoped that they will find much that will be of advantage. The writer, however, would not dare to proceed, having said this much, without saying that the settlement of the great question of practical religion must be made by parents in full view of the fact that it is made, not only for themselves, but also for their children. The more perfectly a man meets all the responsibilities of his relation to his children, the more certain it will be that they will choose as he does.

SECTION I.—BABYHOOD.

If man is not the most helpless creature on earth when first brought into life, he is certainly helpless for the longest period. Slowly, through years of nursing, he comes to an age when he can be trusted out of sight of his parents or guardians. Even then the utmost

care has to be exercised, for another long period, lest he fatally fall into ways of evil. That point of time when he becomes morally responsible for his conduct is of varying character, and difficult to ascertain.

The question material to this discussion is, What can be done in these infantile years towards shaping the character of the future man? Can anything? Too many are disposed to give a negative answer. They suppose influences here are ephemeral,

> "Like the snowfall in the river,
> A moment white—then melts forever."

Consequently, parents are apt to think this time of little importance; no matter how it is passed, so that the child is healthy and gives the least possible concern, and the most pleasure, to those who care for it. But habits may be formed very quickly, even in babyhood. Nor are habits so formed as easily changed as we think. The baby can not reason for itself;

it is therefore the Divine order that its parents or guardians should think for it. They must be eyes for it, and hands and feet. Before it comes to an age of accountability, neither God nor man will hold the child responsible for what it is; but they will, and ought to, hold the parents responsible for defects that lay easily within the reach of proper training to remove. "As the twig is bent, the tree 's inclined." Many a crooked character had its tendencies set before any recollection could be retained of the causes that made it so. Of course, no specific rules can be laid down in regard to the treatment of childhood in view of these facts. We can only raise the warning hand. Parents must pray for the wisdom needed to meet the emergencies as they arise. There are, however, two impulses toward right living that should grow out of the early treatment of children. These impulses should be implanted so early that the consciousness of manhood should bear no recollection of the

contrary. All his remembered life should be walled in by these influences; namely, filial love and filial reverence.

1. *Filial affection.*—The natural idea of the lower animals seems to be to secure the love of the parent and confidence of the offspring long enough to tide over the period of helplessness. When that point is gained, the mother loses all concern and interest. Her children are no more to her than those of any other of her own species. It is rare that anywhere in the animal world the father ever knows or cares for his progeny. It is needless to dwell on the fact that such a course of conduct would be fatal to the highest interests of humanity if found in us. Here a father's love must be second only, and only second in some respects to the mother's. Nor should this care and interest pass away with childhood. Every year should add to its strength. The tender, loving regards of an old man should go back to his parents in a richer,

riper form than ever before. This will be the case if filial love is early developed in a healthy way. This is essential to the influence we ought to exert over our children. There may appear to be danger in this. Some may say, "What if the parents go wrong?" The parents ought not to go wrong. If a man or woman calmly thought what influence their opinions and practices might have on their children, the fact itself would lead to greater care on their part as to these matters. But whether right or wrong, it is the law of human action that we desire to do, and most readily will do, as those we intensely love desire to have us. We all want the love of our children, but we must take it with its attendant consequences. Let us first secure their love, then be careful that its exercise shall not endanger their hopes for time or eternity. None but foolish parents can ever say: "I want my children to grow up to think for themselves. I want them to find their own way into the truth." Why not let

your child find out his own way to what he should eat or drink, or to numberless other things necessary to life? Parents will have a sorry time justifying their conduct before the judgment when such an error led to their children's ruin. We should ever maintain that the opinions and practices we adopt are good enough for our children. If they are not, it is certainly time we asked, in all earnestness, the reason why. It should be a real grief to parents to have their children depart materially from the teachings of their childhood. It should be no less a grief to the children if they find it necessary to put away the instructions of their parents when forced to see that such instruction was wrong. But even that should not break nor seriously loosen the bonds of affection woven in childhood.

2. *Filial respect, or reverence.*—We can not too early secure the respect of a child for parental authority. Even too great a measure of fear is better than a mere sentiment of

affection that leads to no results. We have often heard men say that when they were children they thought their fathers were unkind in the severity of the punishments inflicted. But afterwards they were thankful for the severity, for it created a wholesome dread of what they afterward found would have been ruinous to them. The ideal respect to be gained, and it can only be gained by early, wise, and persistent effort, is to have the affection strong, the confidence equally so, yet both should be coupled with a wholesome fear to transgress the parents' law. This will secure, not an eye service, but a genuine, cheerful, and willing obedience. The curse of the age rests upon a loose parental government. The blessing of God will ever rest upon its opposite. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is the only one of those "ten words" thundered from Sinai that carried with it a Divine promise. Public safety and social prosperity wait on the reign of parental authority. Freedom itself, with all

its attendant blessings, a free press, a free school, and free speech, are by no means an equivalent for this, the most important element in God's plan for ruling the world.

Early in the eighteenth century a man was born who bore the name of Max. He was not a vicious man, nor one that the world would call bad. He was simply a fun-loving, careless man, quite indifferent to responsibility. In 1877 a report from the New York Prison Commission made public the fact that about twelve hundred descendants of this man, including some who had intermarried with them, had been found. The astounding fact was also made public that nearly all of these were "paupers, criminals, imbeciles, insane, or licentious, costing the public about $1,250,000." Like their progenitor, they were all ignorant and careless. Doubtless parental love was not unknown among them, but it was like the affection of the brute, exercised during helplessness, with no thought about the future.

Contrast with these the descendants of Jonathan Edwards, a man of whom America may well be proud. His wife was the granddaughter of Rev. Thomas Hooker, of Hartford, often called the father of Connecticut Churches. She was a woman of great refinement and force of character. She won the admiration of George Whitefield, who said that if it was the Lord's will that he should marry, he would try to be reconciled to his lot, but he did sincerely hope the Lord would give him a wife like Mrs. Edwards. She has been thus described: "She had an excellent way of governing her children. She knew how to make them regard and obey her cheerfully. When she had occasion to reprove or rebuke, she would do it in few words, without warmth and noise, and with all calmness and gentleness of mind. She had need to speak but once, and she was obeyed; murmuring and answering back was unknown among them. When their parents came into the room, they all rose in-

stinctively from their seats, and did not resume them until their parents were seated." We may call this an excess of reverence, but if so, it is an excess in the right direction—an excess that might save many households from the sorrow that comes from disobedient children. Look at the results in this case: There were eleven children in that family which grew up to maturity. Their descendants are known to number as many as fifteen hundred. This, however, includes some who intermarried with them. "They are of the world's true nobility;" not a criminal among them. They have been no burden to society. They have borne more than their share of the burdens of others. The worst character in the whole line was Aaron Burr. He needs an apology, and has it in the fact that at the age of four years he was left without father or mother. He might have been second to none but Washington in the history of his country if he could only have received his grandmother's training, or even that of his

mother. Yet he was never convicted of crime, and rose to the second highest place in the gift of his countrymen. Among the members of this distinguished family are known to be two hundred and eighty-five graduates of colleges, sixty-five college professors, and thirteen college presidents; one of these last, Timothy Dwight, author of the much-loved hymn,

"I love thy kingdom, Lord,"

was a man who, for scholarship, talents, and piety, was scarcely inferior to Jonathan Edwards himself. In 1900, a member of this family, "Robert Walker Taylor by name, was chairman of the committee that bade Mr. Roberts return to his too numerous Utah homes." It was one of the more than one hundred distinguished lawyers belonging to this family, Theodore William Dwight, LL. D., whom James Brice, in his comments on America, placed at the head of legal learning on the continent, who, being chairman of the New

York Prison Commission when it employed Mr. Dugsdale to make his famous study of the "Jukes," as he called the descendants of Max, became largely responsible for this important object-lesson to Christian people. Ministers and missionaries, bearing the blood of this family, have blessed the Church over all the land, and have carried the gospel to the remotest part of the earth.

Now, after making all needed concessions to the law of heredity, and something must be conceded to it, we shall still have large reason to conclude that parental influence has contributed largely to bring about these striking results. And, after all, heredity may be largely counteracted by parental influence. Early training may change it, either for better or worse. So far from parents being made despondent on account of inherited evil tendencies, they should set themselves to watch more carefully the influence of their lives on their offspring, conscious that the evil may be

greatly remedied, or entirely removed, by patience and fidelity in the process of training.

SECTION II.—FAMILY GOVERNMENT.

Incidentally, family government has been treated in the preceding section. But the subject is so very important that we must spend further time in considering it from a more positive and practical standpoint. It is impossible to formulate very specific rules on this subject that will apply in all cases. Rules must vary with the circumstances and the character of the child. Scarcely two in the same family can be treated in all respects in the same manner. How to vary treatment without seeming partiality, or without surrendering in any measure the purpose to be systematic and firm, is one of the most difficult problems of the household. Only wisdom and patience and careful thought can solve it. But we should make up our minds to do it, and keep at it until it is done. There are a few general rules

that may be noted, which will be of some use to parents.

1. The necessity of it should be constantly before our eyes. By whatever means, and however difficult the attainment, parents should feel that obedience to their authority must be strictly required. Human nature loves to have its own way. It will have its own way if it can. This is true of adults and children alike. In the former case, it is supposable that a sound judgment will guide in determining what that way shall be. But children are without that judgment, and it will be part of their home-training to teach them how to get it and exercise it. We must be eyes and ears and hands and feet to those who have not learned to use their own properly. It might be supposed that parental love would be incentive enough to enforce parental control. On the contrary, a misguided affection is often in the way. We think we love them so much when we hate and refuse to cross their desires. Then, again,

parents are weary, or busy, or lack a just appreciation of its importance, and so the golden opportunity is allowed to pass, careless habits of treatment prevail, the children think the government has fallen into their own hands—and too often are right about it—and so the worst consequences are dared rather than to take some trouble and care. But this is the most short-sighted policy one can conceive. Unruly children give their parents never-failing sources of anxiety. A little extra work in starting right is an economical expenditure of strength. Such an outlay will bring peaceful days and restful nights by and by when we have learned that our children can be trusted. More than this. Such an expenditure of time and patience will make good citizens, law-abiding members of the commonwealth, and useful members of society. Still more, it will make good fathers and mothers in the years to come. Carelessly-raised children may be depended upon to produce future careless parents, and

so the miserable succession will run on, a never-ceasing stream of evil to the world.

2. Wisdom and patience are essential. To know a great deal is not the necessary thing involved. Some scholarly people are very unwise in many things, and especially in this thing. The mother who knows all about how to reform society, but knows not how to manage her children, has begun at the wrong end of duty, and in the long run will fail of her purpose. The man who lives for everything but his children may be useful in a way, but has certainly overlooked the first duty God has enjoined, and will probably find a blight coming over his life when the time of peace would be especially grateful to him. Do not forget Divine help. Much prayer will give much patience. Said Samuel Wesley to his wife, and there was bitterness in his tones, "Sukie, why do your persist in telling that child the same thing for the twentieth time?" "Because nineteen times were not enough," quietly answered

the woman who had found grace to rear her children for usefulness. Thus she raised her remarkable family. Thus more such families could be raised if women, yea, and men too, would give the necessary amount of attention to it. As it is, more thought is sometimes given to the improvement of domestic animals than to the early training of children.

3. Parents should not only control their children, they should also be their boon companions. That is not the best family government that holds the children at arm's length. It is the best government that brings them closest to the heart, that secures their utmost confidence, that obtains freely their greatest secrets, that encourages their innocent plays, delights in their harmless amusements; that loves to romp with them, laugh with them, and enjoy their laugh in turn. It is a poor form of family government that leads a child to think that he can never have a good time in his parents' presence. A man is a strange failure,

as a parent, who gives his children pleasure when he goes from home, and sends a shadow over their faces when he returns. A man who forgets the feelings of his youth, ought never to be a father. A woman who does not remember the experiences of her girlhood should never be a mother. The parents who can not heartily enjoy the innocent pleasures of their children, are taking the most successful way possible to drive them into forbidden and dangerous ones whenever they are sure to escape punishment.

4. Teach them self-control. Some things should not be left to their judgment. Some things are of such a nature that a parent can not easily explain why they are forbidden. Possibly there are times when the parent must say, "Do this because I tell you to do it." But this should be the exception, not the rule. Let the children once get the idea that parental requirements are arbitrary and unreasonable, and at once away goes all safe control. Obedi-

ence will then only be obtained by severe measures, and will be thrown off as soon as age will permit. Take time to tell all your reasons which can be understood by them. If you can not gain their consent to avoid what you forbid on the grounds of your stating, ask them to obey now, and wait for further information which by and by they will understand. Your effort will do this much at least: it will convince them that you are anxious to make them see the reasons of your requirements, and that will do them good. There are times when option may be allowed them. The matter may not be very serious; you have an opinion, and you freely give it; but tell them at the same time they may do as they please. Do not throw it in their faces if it ends in unpleasant consequences. Do not use it as a means of securing your way when another such occasion arises. Try them again in the same way. Remember the time is coming when all questions must be settled without your aid, and believe, as you

ought to, that childhood is the time to learn the lesson so much needed in the years to come. You will find, if this course is wisely pursued, that this is the quickest way to gain the confidence that will readily cause them to defer to your judgment in all things.

5. Study character. What would save one boy might ruin another. We should remember that the laws of influence do not materially differ in the case of children and adults. Think what affects you favorably or otherwise. See in what your child differs from you. Do as do the doctors: diagnose the symptoms; see what remedies will most likely meet the case; and govern yourself accordingly. Perhaps you will find fault with these rules. Perhaps you say, "There is so much to learn, and I have no time." Have you time for anything else so important? Is there anything else that ought to lie so near your heart? Is there anything else you will look back upon with so much satisfaction from the throne of judgment, when you

see that by your care and wisdom you are able to say to your Divine Master, "Here am I and the children thou hast given me?" Is it too much to say that parents who will not feel their responsibilities this much, are assuming duties, when children are given them, for which they are utterly unfit?

SECTION III.—EXAMPLE.

There is an old proverb to the effect that actions speak louder than words. Precepts will have less force on children's minds than conduct. Parents owe it to their children that their example may be safely followed. A man should never do anything that he does not want his child to do when he becomes a man. Commandment that contradicts conduct is of no further use than while the child is in sight and can be governed by fear.

The influence of example begins in babyhood. The frown on a mother's face will have a depressing effect upon the mental condition

of a helpless child. Cheerful looks, pleasant smiles, kindly tones, will make happy childhood, and develop amiable dispositions. Scolding mothers will make cross children. Anger in parents will stir up strife among children. It would be better if parents would never punish a child in any way until quite conscious of being free from the spirit of anger or resentment. A moment's reflection will convince parents of the fact that it is a most incongruous thing to be vindictive towards their own offspring. A Quaker grandfather did not believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. But he never used the rod except at what he called a "family opportunity." The whole family must come together, though not including hired help; a chapter was read from the Bible, attention was called to the consequences of evil-doing, and also to the necessity of parental discipline, and then, when all were in tears, none more so than the father himself, the blows were laid on with a vigorous hand. A son of that man said in old

age: "One such a performance in a lifetime was enough for me. I never gave occasion for another." It may be added that seldom did one of the younger members of that family ever need a repetition of it, though exercised upon one older.

Children have a right to a consistent example from their parents on the subject of morals and religion. A man who professes godliness and lives like a sinner, greatly errs if he thinks his children can not see through the thin guise of his hypocrisy. We have seen the most dangerous advocate of infidelity the Nation has yet produced traveling over the country speaking in terms of reproach of a father's piety. How much his bad influence may be traced to the inconsistencies of his father eternity alone can reveal. Parents should never trifle with truth if they would have their children grow up truthful. If for any purpose parents tell lies to their children, they may be certain the lesson will be soon learned by them. If

gossip is freely dispensed at the table, be sure that a family of talebearers and mischief-makers will grow up to curse the community. If a man smokes, he may be reasonably certain that his son will do the same thing, though he have to learn his sickening lesson in secret. If a man drinks, he may as well calculate that his son will take all the chances of being a drunkard through his father's example.

Association of an evil character is a form of example greatly to be dreaded. A boy will sometimes draw stronger on one of his own age than all his father's precepts and all his mother's prayers. Many a good family training has been neutralized by evil associations. We must ever remember that our children can not be trained as though they were not in the world. Every boy they play with, every man of prominence whose habits they know, helps in making up the environment that shall give them beauty or deformity. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." A heathen man wrote this,

and Paul indorsed it as true, and rewrote it with the authority of inspiration. How can parents encourage or even permit so great a danger?

Not essentially different from evil associations is the influence of bad books. In this day of cheap literature much poison is being circulated. The leaves of this tree of death lie thick all around us. The daily press is a wondrous power, but it is far from being a power only for good. It is among the most dangerous influences in the land. Unless purer than any known to the writer, it would be far safer to prohibit its promiscuous reading by children until they have reached an age of discrimination. Either keep it out of their hands, or eliminate its filth before it goes there.

SECTION IV.—TEACHING RELIGION.

There is no more appropriate place in the world to teach religion than in the family. Parents are guilty of an omission of duty of

the most culpable nature who neglect to teach their children religion at home. It was the primitive method. It was there Abel learned to offer an acceptable sacrifice. It was there Enoch learned to walk with God. The law of Moses provided priests to offer sacrifices, but no public instructors to teach religion. It laid this duty where it first belongs—on the hearts of parents. Prophetical instruction grew up in time, but it was never very systematic; the befitting place was still left with the parents. The synagogue was probably an evolution from the exile. It was mainly for reading the Scriptures and the offering of public prayer. It does not appear that children had any prominent place in its services. Christianity instituted a ministry as an inseparable part of its system; but it by no means follows that it was intended to take the place of family instruction. It is high time the ministry itself cry out against this perversion of duty. We shall see in due time what the ministry owe the children; but

parents are frightfully remiss in duty if they suppose the pastor can do their work in the family. Sunday-schools are a great blessing to the world, and are capable of being much more so; but Sunday-schools are a curse to that family that on account of them has no religious instruction at home. The heathen should teach such parents. Scarcely anywhere is heathen instruction inculcated save in the family. Yet how well is it done there! The prophet reckoned with it when he said, "Hath a nation changed its gods which are no gods?" The duty is plain. Parents should know enough to be able to do it. With books and helps on every hand there is no excuse for a want of ability to teach all that is necessary of the evangelical faith to give the children a thorough grounding in practical piety.

Some suggestions are here submitted for the prayerful consideration of all concerned:

1. Overcome the diffidence which naturally attends this duty. There is, at least in many in-

stances, a reserve between parents and children which increases with age. The parents freely talk of opinions, of doctrines, of Church matters—often in the last-named instance in an unwise manner—but when it comes to the more practical and personal interests of religion there is hesitancy. The channel of intimacy seems closed up, or at best only partially open. Children will often make entire strangers their confidants rather than their own parents. This ought not to be so. It sometimes proves a barrier to the children's becoming pious. A pastor said to a young man in a time of religious revival: "I wish you would give your heart to God. Do it for your own sake; but do it also for your father's sake. He would be so glad if you would." With a sad emphasis he answered: "I do n't know about that. He never said so to me." Knowing that the father was an official member of the Church, and very active in Church work, the pastor was surprised and chagrined. That father he soon found, and

straitly charged him not to sleep until he had told his son how anxious he was that he should become an earnest Christian. That son at once took the desired step. It might have been accomplished sooner if the father had tenderly and lovingly opened his heart to his boy. Surely there ought to be no one to whom children should go so readily for help in temptation, for instruction in doubt, and for relief in religious conflict, as to father and mother. There ought to be no joy in a man's heart so delightful as that which comes from being able to lift a child over the rough places he finds on his way to his eternal home.

2. In answer to the question to what extent should home instruction go, there can be no very definite answer. The skill of the parent, the disposition of the child, and many other conditions come in to change the character of the instruction. It should rarely involve controversial points, and yet it is due every child that he should know the reasons why he prefers

the Church of his fathers to any other. It should seldom involve dogmatic theology, yet it ought to be sound and orthodox. It should ever strive to be practical. A man or woman who has learned the way, has carefully marked out the wiles of the adversary of his or her soul, has learned to triumph over temptation, knows why this is the Church of his or her choice, can always have a fund of instruction to draw upon sufficiently great for all needed purposes.

3. Do not attempt the impossible. Do not try to drive your children into the kingdom. God will not destroy their freedom of choice; why should you attempt it? We must work upon the will to induce its free action. Some parents scold their children because they are are not religious. They fall into the habit of nagging them about it in the presence of others. This is about the most effective way of keeping them out of the kingdom the devil himself could devise. It will most likely create a disgust for

the whole subject. Especially be careful to respect their feelings by never humiliating them in the presence of others. A pastor met one of his flock on a Sunday morning as she was leading, in a rough sort of manner, her son to the church. She had him by the collar of his coat, and was pushing him along by main force. The boy's face was red with rage, every movement showed the spirit of rebellion; nothing but superior strength kept him for one moment in her grip. With much asperity of manner she said to her minister: "I want you to give Eddy a good scolding; he tried to run away this morning so as to stay away from Church; but I caught him at it, and I 'll show him that he has to go to Church with his mother." The pastor said a few kind words to the boy, which brought the tears to his eyes freely, but felt that the mother needed the scolding she so imperiously demanded for her son. Now this woman was conscientious. She thought that she was doing her very best to meet the respon-

sibility of her position. The real fact was, that she was taking the best possible course to drive all religious tendencies from the spirit of her son. It should be a fixed rule in family management never to speak reproachfully of children to others in their presence. It may be a question as to the expediency of doing it when they are not present; but none at all when they are. If the child is in trouble, and the parent does not see just how to help him, with the child's consent, mutual friend or confidant can be called in for counsel. But that is quite another matter.

4. Never encourage a child to indulge in a vain hope. Some mothers tell their children how much they have prayed for them, and how certain they are that "the children of many prayers can not be lost." About the worst thing that could happen to such children would be to believe their mothers thoroughly. A mother's prayers are no doubt of great worth in the sight of God; but they are worse than

a broken reed for children to lean upon as a ground of salvation. A minister kindly asked after the spiritual welfare of a man high up in railroad official position. He was about as bad as he could be, morally speaking, and the minister knew that quite well. The man smiled and said he had a very pious mother who was still praying for him. He said it in a manner to indicate that that ought to settle the question of any danger on his part. This prompted some plain talk on the part of his clerical adviser. A cloud of displeasure passed over the countenance, and he replied with much warmth: "You believe in prayer, and so do I. My mother has told me a hundred times that she knew I was going to be saved. I believe my mother. There is nothing more to be said on the subject." It would have been better for him if his mother had never prayed for him. Prayer, encouragement, and warning, these go together. They are all helpful if found together; they may greatly mislead if separated.

5. Children should be carefully taught the proper observance of the Sabbath. This is a difficult task. It will need the most careful teaching and the best possible example. Two extremes are to be avoided. The first is the extreme of laxity. This is the danger of the times. If children are allowed to treat the Sabbath as though it possessed no real sanctity, they will soon fall into the ways of the world. That holy time, so essential to their religious growth and prosperity, will become a day of recreation, amusement, or of business. The Continental Sabbath will very soon produce the Continental religion. Churches will be emptied, or only attended at an early hour as a prelude to sports and pastimes.

A little better, but not yet the right way, is the extreme of Puritanic severity of Sabbath observance. It is not difficult to create in the minds of children a dread of the return of the Sabbath. This will generally result in a total disregard for the sacredness of the day

as soon as home is forsaken. It will require skill to lead the child in a safe path between these two extremes; but it will be a necessity to his proper training, and the result will amply repay the parents for their care and trouble in securing the result.

We ought to put sunshine into the day. We ought to plan beforehand for that which can be made a source of pleasure to the children, and yet not lead them to consider it as other days. Useful instruction, pleasant reading, cheerful conversation, even a stroll in the open air if that may be done without mingling with those who degrade the day, may make the Sabbath a delight, and leave sweet memories of it in the years of maturity and old age.

SECTION V.—FAMILY WORSHIP.

From every family prayer and praise should daily arise. At least once a day the household, including servants if such there be, should come together for this purpose. Two reasons may

be urged in favor of this custom. 1. Because it is needed. The family will be the better for it. The children will be more loving and more obedient. The parents more patient and loving. The servants more genial and kindly. Nothing serves so well to bring all men into right relations to each other as to bring them into right relations to God. To put him at the head of the household is to make all its members in highest harmony with each other. 2. It is important as an educator for children. Do we want them to pray? We must set them the example. The parents who teach their children the necessity of prayer, but never pray with them, belie their teaching by their conduct, and will fail of securing their object. Some general rules may be of service in the discharge of this duty.

1. Be brief. Long, tedious prayers are out of place anywhere, but never more so than in family worship. It makes children nervous, and proves irksome and disagreeable to every-

body. This fact helps to solve another problem in regard to this matter. Many claim that they are not sufficiently gifted in prayer to do this service. Fortunate if they are not, if by gift they mean the easy multiplication of words. A few simple petitions for what the soul most needs constitute the most fitting prayer at any time. There is no impropriety in thinking beforehand what one wishes to pray for, nor yet in framing their thoughts into words. More reverent is the man who comes into the presence of God with a clear conception of what he wants than the one who prays in a haphazard sort of a way, using many repetitions, a thing clearly condemned by our Lord.

2. It would be far better to use forms of prayer than not to pray at all in the family. There is no reason to deny that true devotion may exist in kneeling and reading an appropriate prayer. It is readily conceded that such a custom may lose that spontaneity of prayer which is one of its great charms. But though

less profitable, it will certainly be far better than to live in a prayerless home. If the service should consist of nothing more than kneeling and repeating the Lord's Prayer, it would be a consistent and beautiful worship. Indeed, that prayer ought always to be repeated by all the family, not only because of its beauty of expression and the importance of its petitions, but also as a means of allowing the voices of all to be heard in appropriate prayer.

3. Make family worship as interesting as possible. A little singing is greatly to be desired. Let the children have a choice in the hymn to be sung. If musical instruments are available, by all means let them be used. Let the Scripture lesson be selected with care. It is neither wise nor profitable to read the Bible by course in family worship, nor yet to take a chapter to read when one does not know what may be its contents. This does not involve any question as to the value of the whole Bible, or the inspiration of the whole of it; it means

nothing more than the question how to use it to the best advantage. A very suitable way of reading is to take the passages suggested in the International Lesson. It greatly adds to the interest to read responsively, giving all a chance to take part. A psalm committed to memory, and repeated together, is a profitable way of varying the service. All this need not take a great length of time. But if it did, is it not time well spent? Can we afford not to give some really valuable time to the work of promoting the religious life in our homes? Observation has convinced the writer that no custom of the household leaves so deep an impression on the minds of children as this when wisely conducted. They will instinctively turn back to it in thought from the period of latest life. As for the best time, if but once a day, it is better in the morning. It will then throw its charm over the day's duties and trials. But if difficult for the morning, then at night. But at whatever time it occurs, let it be done cheer-

fully. Let it be a time when all can be together. Let it be thought about. Let it be considered as necessary a part of the family life as the daily meals. "If there is a will there will be a way."

SECTION VI.—MOTIVE.

The sculptor has a definite idea of what the appearance of his statue shall be before he builds up the clay model or chisels a chip from the block of marble out of which he proposes to cut it. The painter sees in imagination the picture he proposes to paint before he dips his brush in the pigment. A clear conception of what we want to do is essential to the highest measure of success in any undertaking. This conception forms the primal motive which leads us on in our work. Should not parents have a clear idea of what sort of characters they propose to develop in their children? Should they not have an ideal manhood and womanhood they hope to have realized in their children?

Should not that ideal be ever before them? Should they not carefully ward off everything that might mar it? Should they not diligently nourish and encourage everything that can promote or perfect it? Allowing that some things can not be foretold, such as the calling the child will pursue, the measure of its health and strength, the unforeseen circumstances that may give effect to its environment, is there not enough left to furnish a basis of a genuine character such as we can rejoice in securing? The affirmative of these questions is, no doubt, the only reasonable conclusion to which we can come. The following suggestions may be of use:

1. It would be the extreme of folly for parents to seek to bring their children up to a standard of character lower than their highest ideals. What should we think of a painter who would attempt to produce a picture less perfect than his ideal? He may fail of reaching his ideal; but he will do his best to accomplish it.

So the sculptor may fail of reaching his ideals; but he will do far better work to keep it ever before him. Parents may not see their children all they wished to have them; but their children will attain a higher standard if the perfect is ever the object in pursuit in their training. Children should be trained for eternity. No temporal adjustment of life to earthly and physical surroundings ought to be satisfactory. Earth is secondary. Heaven is highest. These are not contradictory one to the other, at least ought not to be, and will not be if God has his way with men. The best preparation for heaven is the most perfect fitness for earth. He who is meet for his heavenly home, is best fitted for the Master's use on earth. Still as things are in the world now, it is true that earth and heaven may not both be held in their God-given relations. It is also true that a large measure of meetness for this world may be secured without any preparation for heaven. The duty of parents toward their children

should be to teach them the wisdom of sacrificing the less for the greater, time for eternity, this world for the next. If we must lose either, earth must lie on the altar. Even more should be taught. It would be wise to lose much that may seem innocent, rather than to take any chances of marring our prospects of eternal fruition. The true ideal is that taught by our Lord. The kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, this first, then such of the blessings of life as we may secure through the Power that rules in all things earthly and heavenly. We may be certain that such a choice will receive a hundred-fold in this present world, and in that to come eternal life. No man or woman is fit to be intrusted with the care of a child who would not sooner see that child following the most humble occupation, living in the most ordinary way, yet with the Savior's smile daily resting upon him, than to see him rich, or great, or learned, and yet godless.

2. Parents may be sure that whatever their motives may be their children will find it out, and if they love their parents as they ought to they will try to attain the characters their parents choose for their standard. Does it appear to these children that the greatest delight of their parents is in seeing them have a good time? Do they hear their parents say, "There is time enough for dull care and hard work; let them have a sunny childhood?" They will hear, and they will see, and the sense of responsibility will go with the thought. Habits of industry, a useful life, school, books, everything will be sacrificed for fun. With such a disposition developed, as maturity comes on, situations will be secondary to fun, honesty second to carousal, crime itself hazarded rather than lose a night at the place of greatest amusement. And so, when the parents seek for the fruitage of their care, they find nothing but the apples of Sodom. Parents who believe in allowing their children to sow their

wild oats in their youth, if they live long enough, will see those children reaping wild oats as their only harvest.

Does it appear that money-getting is the parents' ideal of their children's success? Money-getting can be easily inculcated. Children soon learn what secures them the means of pleasure. They will easily learn that money is a greatly-desired object of acquisition. But some will say, Ought we not to teach our children the value of money? We ought to teach them industry, economy, and especially frugality; we ought to teach our children how much good can be done with money; but we should teach them, also, that "the love of money is the root of all evil." We should give them line upon line in this regard. The times are full of danger. More souls are being lost for this reason than any other. To hold up money as the great object of pursuit is to point them to the worship of Mammon. To hold up men who have made immense fortunes by fraud

and lying, and all manner of rascality compatible with an imperfectly-administered law, is to teach them to take their part in the future ruin of their fellow-men, a very large part in its criminality, perchance, attended by a very small part of its ill-gotten gains. Honesty and charity should be taught as prominently as anything they learn. They should be taught in the most effective way—by the example of their parents. All children should be taught, and taught it in the most effective manner, that poverty, coupled with strict integrity, is both more honorable and more conducive to happiness, than millions obtained at the loss of a noble manhood.

Is ambition the aim of the parents' efforts? It is well to teach the children to be well prepared to deserve the confidence of their fellow-men. They should be taught never to evade responsibility, but accept it in the fear of God. But to hold before them honor's prize, to create an ambition to fill offices of

trust and profit as an end worthy of all effort to gain, will be only to add to the army of political office-hunters that have already nearly wrecked the ship of State. To train a child to drill in the fight for political power, or to encourage him in such a course, is equivalent to turning him into the filthiest life that men look upon in these days of party strife. To teach patriotism is as necessary as to teach piety, if we would have our children perfect. But the only way to do that is to teach them piety towards God, and patriotism as a God-given duty. They should be taught that a criminal, a law-breaker, or a dishonest man is, in a very important sense, a traitor to his country.

Even in the matter of education we may make a most grievous mistake. No education is complete that does not include the spiritual nature. While our children are in public school we have them at home. It will be our own fault if their religious training is neg-

lected. But if they go from home, what then? Will we make their religion second to their scholarship? They will do the same. If, for the sake of supposed or real advantages in science and literature, the parents send their children where religion is ignored or furtively set at naught, will not the children conclude that, in the estimation of the parents, religion is second to intellectual attainments, and act accordingly? And what are the prospects of the Christian life when such a motive predominates? Far better to use the lesser advantage than hazard ruin by lowering the motive of all living.

Once more: The daughters of the present generation will be largely responsible for the characters of both men and women in the next. What thought have mothers in raising their daughters? That they shall learn to appear well in company? That they shall make a sensation in fashionable circles? That they shall win the hand of some rich man, or hon-

ored officer of his country, or, perhaps, some titled man of another? If conditions favor, there may be one chance in a thousand of their realizing, in whole or in part, their ambitious hopes. There are many, very many, of the remaining chances that they will put any amount of vanity into the minds of their children. From such sources comes a multitude of homes made desolate. From such sources comes the press of divorce cases with which the courts are crowded. From such sources come the scandals that imbitter the lives of fathers and mothers, and which often serve to bring them with sorrow to the grave. Earth and heaven alike are being sacrificed by fond, but unwise, mothers on the altar of their unhallowed ambition. Is this a needless warning? Open your eyes and look around you. Allow facts to have their due weight. Do not imagine that your daughters are so unlike others who have been wrecked on the very rocks where yours are steering under your di-

rection. Teach them very quickly that the favor of God is of more worth to them than that of any man "whose breath is in his nostrils." There will be dangers enough then to give you solicitude. There is still the straight gate and the narrow way. Think not that it is so easy to find that you need have no care about missing it.

SECTION VII.—HOME.

The Anglo-Saxon has the word home in his vocabulary. Neither the word nor its equivalent is a common inheritance of the tribes of earth. Most people are satisfied to have a house. We want a home. The Englishman gives more thought to his home than Americans. Continental ways are obtruding themselves on the birthrights of our country. We shall have taken a long step backward when the club-house, the theater, the concert-hall, the beer-garden, the saloon, or any other place takes precedence of home. Children

should have a home. It is a God-given right. It should be made attractive. To it their minds should turn with pleasure. Life in it should never be an affliction to be avoided as soon as possible. Absence from it should be attended with longings to return to it. In old age it should have memories of the purest and sweetest character. To the inquiry as to what constitutes a home, we offer the following suggestions:

1. It does not necessarily involve a great expenditure of money. It need not be a palace. Indeed, elegantly-furnished palaces may be cold and uninviting. Boys often prefer the street to them. If fathers do not love their home, if mothers leave it mainly to the care of servants, if children have only there the companionship of inferiors, what wonder if almost any place is better to them than home? In fact, such a place is not a home, though it cost a million of dollars.

2. Still, home should be made attractive.

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It does not need a large fortune to do that. A little thought, a little planning, some extra work, may make home not only comfortable, but positively agreeable. Make the rooms of the children especially pleasant. Let them know that their parents are glad to go to some extra outlay of work and money to secure their happiness. Aside from the comfort afforded, such a course will strengthen their affection, stir up the spirit of gratitude, and lead to greater love for parents as well as for home. Such outlays will do them more good than hoarding money for them to quarrel over when their parents are dead.

3. Let home be well stocked with good, healthy literature. Books are the best investment a man can make for his home. Public libraries may be used with discretion; but let the children, and parents as well, have books as friends, books that they love, books that they study. A book ought to be kept out of the house that will not bear reading more than

once. Talk with the children about their books. Help them to understand them. This will correct their tastes more easily than a hundred scoldings. If you can not create a taste for such books as shall be to your judgment, find books that will capture them without corrupting. Above all, do not allow a morbid taste for novel-reading to crowd out all sensible and solid instruction. The habit of reading novels is ruining the minds of thousands, if not destroying their souls. To the devotees of this vice solid literature has no charm, duties are neglected, children are allowed to run wild, work becomes irksome, sleep is even neglected —all for the sake of indulging a habit that can do little or nothing in building character or stimulating intellect. The fact that so many religious novels are published and read does not materially lessen the evil. Often these religious novels contain erroneous teachings, and rarely present truth in a normal and practical light.

4. By all means have music in the house-

hold. Teach your children to sing. Sing with them. If possible, have some instruments of music in the home. Occasional games may be profitable, if they are such games as do not lead to bad habits, or into bad associations. There ought to be innocent pastimes for weary parents. Wisely furnish what is safe and wholesome, and you will have less trouble in keeping them from that which is dangerous.

5. Make it a business to be at home yourself as much as possible. Contrive to add all you can to home delights. The multiplication of lodges is a great menace to happy homes. If they do not lead to dissipation, they take the husband and father from the sweetest joys a man can know. Whatever advantage these lodges afford, it will be more than compensated to him who loves his home and makes his home lovable.

The Christian home! It is sometimes realized in good measure. It is far oftener realized in small measure. It is still oftener

realized in no measure at all. The parents are true, loving, and deferential towards each other, even down to oldest age. Cross words are not heard by their children, nor uttered by them in secret, nor harbored in their thoughts. Peace reigns in the home. The children truly love each other, and are happy in each other's society. The atmosphere is like that on the heavenly mountains. The grateful incense of loving hearts goes up well-pleasing before the throne of the Eternal, "and blessings crown the board." This is the true nursery of the Church, the best nursery of patriotism, the fountain of social purity, the earthly heaven for the pilgrims of Zion. O for more of these genuine Christian homes!

Chapter V.

THE CHURCH.

The claims of the children on the Church, the duty that God has laid upon the Church, the possibilities of the Church in this field of labor—these are the subjects to be discussed in this chapter. It will also be necessary for us to see the shortcomings of parents as well as of the Church in this important matter.

The Church may be considered from two points of view: First, as a place where Christians are banded together for mutual helpfulness; where the weak are nourished, the wayward corrected, the strong inspirited, and all are instructed in the things that make for their growth in grace and consequent meetness for the Master's service. The second point of view presents the Church as God's great instrument

for giving the gospel to the world; not only taking it to the heathen, but also to the neglected at home, bringing all men, so far as possible, to accept Christ as their Savior. In both relations of Church work the children come in for their share, and a large share it would certainly be if the Church could be induced to see its grandest opportunity. Let us just here consider the actual state of the case.

The children are not being trained as they ought to be at home. Some good people, thoroughly good, are not wise in the matter of training their children. Wise and useful ministers are sometimes found who show singular weakness in managing their own households. Indeed, with some, the sermon, the study, the parish, crowd out all thought of their personal relations to their own families. Some are singularly happy in teaching everybody's children except their own. Goodness is one thing; wisdom is quite another. Happy the man in whom these are happily blended! They are

often mismatched. Wisdom with badness is the bane of the world. Goodness with folly is the bane of the Church. Some men are good, we can not question their goodness, and we know that they desire to be useful, and are conscientious in their attempts in that direction; but their efforts show wonderful weakness in application, so that the good they might have done seems to result in evil instead. There is no field of Christian work where this remark is more applicable than in the training of children. Training means something more than good teaching and good example. It means adjustment, it means appropriateness. In teaching it means the right word, at the right time, in the right manner. In management, it means influences appropriate to character, wisely exerted. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Certainly not the man or woman who thinks little about them, nor seeks the help of God.

And here a fact may be profitably considered: Some parents, not wise in religion,

are yet wise in all else concerning the training of their children. In this respect they are far more successful than many who seem to walk with God. Hence comparisons are often made to the disadvantage of the children of pious parents. Odious remarks are made about the latter greatly to the disparagement of religion. Sometimes the children of religious parents go out into the world destitute of a religious character. Sometimes the children of irreligious parents easily find their way into the Church. The writer belonged to a family of six children. The mother was a member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers. She said but little on the subject of religion, but what she said was wise. The father, though at first a Quaker, became a skeptic. But he managed his children well when considered from a moral and prudential standpoint. All those children found their way into orthodox Churches, the most of them early in life. The father himself became a praying Christian ten years before

his death. Surely order and propriety are near akin to the Christian life.

All these considerations lead us to see more clearly the field that opens out before the Church in regard to the training of children in the religion of Jesus Christ. There are children of ungodly parents all around us who may be taught; their parents would rather have them taught than not. Then there are a multitude of poorly-trained children of Christian parents who greatly need the want of right instruction at home, supplemented by the agency of the Church. This, in fact, constitutes the most inviting field of work to the earnest Christian. It is proposed, in the following sections, to take a somewhat comprehensive view of the means in use, or the means that ought to be in use, to secure the best results.

SECTION I.—BAPTISM.

Every Christian ought to feel that his Church is also the Church of his children. He

should desire that in some way his children sustain a personal relation to his own Church. This is not only Scriptural, but it meets the judgment and longings of every true parent. With the great mass of the Church this end has been thought to warrant the baptism of infants. If any deny them this, they certainly ought not to deny them the use of the Church, the interest of the Church, the prayers of the Church, the instruction of the Church. But to those who believe in the baptism of children it is a question of practical moment. What is the significance of this ceremony? What is the relation of baptized children to the Church?

It is certainly a misfortune to the cause of infant baptism that those who hold to it have not always been wise in explaining its nature. The error has been found, both in defining it inaccurately, and in not defining it at all. Some baptize infants from a superstitious idea of its efficacy. They have an idea that there is some communication of Divine favor as a conse-

quence of the ceremony. Others have their children baptized because it is the custom, looks well, is an occasion of importance to fond parents. If asked for a religious reason for the act, they have none to give. Some who never attend Church, or in any way show regard to Christianity other than this, are yet quite anxious that a minister should be called in, and have the baby "christened." Very early in the Christian Church it was considered as equivalent to regeneration. Such a view well suited an age that made much of signs and charms and omens. This error, like a blight, soon spread over the whole Church, and for many centuries held on to it with a deathlike grip. The Reformation was only a partial relief from this error. The taint of this evil is still found in some of the old Churches, and every now and then finds practical indorsement among those who are supposed to be farthest removed from the superstitions of the Dark Ages. The Protestant Church stands to-day in the anoma-

lous position of defending, by some of its members, every phase of this question, from the extreme of sacramentarianism to the opposite extreme of casting out the sacraments from the Church entirely, as though they were the useless lumber of an effete superstition. May we not, ought we not, to find a golden mean in this matter? Can we not use a good thing without abusing it?

Let it then be first stated that baptism does not in any sense save the child either from hell or "limbo," whatever a foolish superstition may mean by the word. Exactly the same truth should apply to adult baptism. To suppose that baptism opens the gates of heaven is to suppose it possessed of a potency only administered through the Holy Spirit. It is a curious fact that, whenever baptism is given such supposed efficacy, the office and work of the Holy Spirit is either ignored or positively denied. Who can believe that the loving, truthful, Christian Whittier is lost to all eternity because

he was never baptized with water? It is useless longer to reason on such unreasonable notions. Let them go into the chaos of outgrown opinions as among the most pernicious that ever vexed the Christian Church.

The Lord Christ held little children in his arms, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Yet these children were not baptized. Baptism, in a Christian sense, had not yet been instituted. Baptism, then, does not mean putting children in covenant relations with God. They are already in such relations. It is not an instrument of their salvation, but a sign of the fact that they are already saved. It is not to open heaven to them if they die in infancy; it is to open the instrumentalities of the Church to them if they live. It is not for death, but for life that they are baptized. It is also an act by which the parents present their children to the Church for its offices of instruction and oversight.

Should we baptize an infant supposed to

be dying? Not if it ministers to a superstition of its parents. This, in all such cases, should be carefully explained. But, as a solemn form of dedication to God, it is both permissible and desirable. Then the idea should be carefully impressed upon the parents that, if the child lives, it lives in open and visible relation to the Church. The writer has baptized many infants in this way, that did not die, as was expected, but lived to be a watch-care to the Church. In more than one instance it eventuated in bringing the parents, as well as the children, into the Church. It is due to all who have this service done for them or their children, to see that baptism looks Churchward, not especially heavenward. It does not introduce them to the fellowship of the invisible, but to the watch-care of the visible Church.

We are thus brought to see the real design of baptism. It does not change the relation of the subject to God, but to the Church. In an age sufficient for accountable and re-

sponsible Church-membership it is a rite that inaugurates the subject into responsible Church-membership. In infancy it inaugurates the subject into a ward membership, where the responsibility falls on its parents, guardians, and the Church. There he remains until old enough to assume the vows of a Christian life, when he should be taken into the relation of full and responsible membership in the body of Christ.

This word "ward" membership is no trifling distinction. It means much. Parents should understand that, in having their children baptized, they put them into the Church, that they are to grow up in the Church, have the instruction of the Church, and, when old enough and intelligent enough, that they are to be received into responsible membership in the Church. If they do not mean this much, they do not mean enough to have their children baptized. If they really do mean that, their children ought to be baptized at their request,

whether they are members themselves or not. It is very inconsistent for parents to ask for the services of a Church in behalf of their children, and yet not be willing that the same children should be members of that Church.

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." When is it best to plant? Surely not when the thing planted has grown to maturity. We have trouble enough in trying to remove and transplant an old tree. If it lives at all, it must be by the greatest care and watchfulness. Even then the life will not be a healthy one. Such a tree will not be likely to bear much fruit in old age. Plant the seed, or, at least, the very small twig. This only can secure a healthy growth and the blessing of future years. Why not put the children where you want them to grow and develop? Why not train them carefully in the Church rather than out of it? Why let their

affections grow away from the Church, expecting grace to work a sudden transformation, when grace will more easily and naturally develop them in loving relationship to it? What parent does not crave to have the name of his child on the same Church record with his own? Is it not better to tell the child from its infancy that it is already numbered among the children of God, and labor to have it ever remain in that relation? Is it possible to pursue such a course without its having a potent influence upon the lives of our children?

SECTION II.—CONVERSION.

We use the word conversion in the sense of a change of heart—a change so produced as to enable the subject of it to know that he has been forgiven, and that he has become a child of God by adoption, the Holy Spirit having borne testimony to that effect. Our proposition is that such a conversion may be secured in early childhood, and that we should labor to

have it brought about at the earliest practicable period.

It is a great error, yet a frequent one in the history of Christianity, that baptism, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with some knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, are the only requisites of Church-membership; indeed, of the Christian life. If such a mistake were an essential outgrowth of a belief in infant baptism, we should most surely advocate at once the abolition of the custom. Not even culture can take the place of conversion. But culture may, and ought to lead on and up to conversion. The conversion of our children should be the goal towards which all our efforts should tend. To keep them consciously saved should be the highest object of our religious teaching. Conversion is the central idea of Christianity. They who come to sit at the feet of Jesus must expect the loving, but most positive assurance, "Ye must be born again." This is the greatest message of heaven to men, the

one about which all other gospel truths revolve as satellites about a central sun.

Children need conversion. They do not become living Christians without it. Its transformations may be, indeed, must be, less remarkable than those which attend the conversion of adults, especially after years of sinning. Still, there is no small difference between an unconscious acceptance of Christ in childhood, and a conscious sense of his love and favor growing out of faith in him. It is certain that children are saved, living or dying, before the age of responsibility. After that we can only be certain that they are saved by the evangelical process of conversion. Grace does not do for a man what he is able to do for himself. The highest good of the creature is involved in this important truth. The relation the child sustains to God before accountability, it is of God to fix. When instruction is possible, instruction is needed. When conversion is possible, then conversion is needed.

The condition of unconverted children who die after the age of accountability is none of our concern. We ought not to be frightened into the performance of our duty. Our responsibility is to see that they are converted at the earliest possible period. Every parent knows that by nature a child is selfish and sensual. This shows its need of regenerating power. It must be the will of God that these sinful tendencies should be changed. They never will be changed except by the co-operation of the one changed. Nobody, old or young, is regenerated except by faith.

This regeneration may take place at so early an age as to escape the notice of parents. It may take place at so early an age as to be easily forgotten by the child; but it is nevertheless real, and is attended by fruits as manifest as are those seen in adults. There is much skepticism even among Christians in regard to the conversion of children. Some, remembering their own struggles at a later age, have said,

"How can a mere child master the conditions of such a change?" They forget that the very cause of their own conflict was their unlikeness to children. They forget at what a great advantage the little one sets out to seek Christ. The child will have his difficulties, and they are in nature much like those of riper years, but they are gauged to a child's strength, and, relatively, are easier overcome.

There is nothing hard or easy with Omnipotence. It is easy enough for God to do anything his wisdom sees ought to be done. The difficulty of salvation is all with us. We fail to submit and trust as we ought to do. Our hard-fought battles all come from this. The child has it in his very nature to submit and trust; he is schooled in that before he is schooled in anything else. Hence he more easily rests on the promise, and opens his heart to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. Then, too, his habits are less persistent, and his will less stubborn. Thus he more easily allows

the Divine will to have way in his life. The children are almost invariably the first to be affected when revival influences are at work. A fraction of the work necessary to lead a few sinners to Christ would bring many more children to a saving knowledge of God.

The process of a child's conversion is not unlike that of adults. There is first a sense of sin, not so much of actual transgression as of being wrong. There is a sense of helplessness; the child does not see how he can get rid of his burden. As Christ is pointed to as the way of salvation, the child grasps the thought. He gives up to Divine power, and is saved. The following illustration of conversion at an early age the writer vouches for in every particular:

A little girl, only a little past four years of age, had been very impatient and nervous all one day. As she knelt with her mother by her little crib at night, she seemed to feel that she had been naughty, and showed signs of sorrow. As the mother laid her in her couch

with the usual good-night kiss, she clung to her mother's neck, and, with many tears, said, "O mamma, what makes me so naughty?" It was a golden moment and well improved. She was told how by nature she had a bad heart, but that Jesus came into the world to change it. The child answered quickly, "Will he change mine if I ask him?" The mother's faith was now heavily taxed. She had ever sought to be true to her children, and did not dare to say what was uncertain. She must not deceive her little girl, and yet, was it possible that one so young could be converted? But there was no time to be lost; the child was waiting for an answer. The answer was cautiously worded, "Yes, my child, if you ask him aright." The mother's doubts had made a safe road for retreat. She did not expect the question that followed, "Will he do it now, mamma, if I ask him aright?" Things were coming to a crisis. The time for retreat was not yet; nor was it easy to find so good a chance to escape

from the consequences if she went too far. It took some faith for the mother to step out upon the untried ground that lay immediately before her, but, with trembling, she ventured. "Yes," she answered, "if you ask him aright." Without a word the little one crept from her crib and kneeled upon the floor. The tears and prayers of both mother and daughter were mingled in the struggle that followed. It was a struggle for life. Twice the child was replaced in her crib, and twice she returned to her knees unsatisfied. At last she said, while the smile shone through her tears, "Mamma, Jesus has given me a new heart." Many will say, "A childish fancy." So the mother was inclined to think. So the father was inclined to think when, at bedtime, he was told what had happened. But so neither thought when, the next day, their little darling, too young to dissemble, was seen to be the most patient and loving and obedient child that any parent could desire. And when days and weeks and months

found the fruit of the Spirit still abiding, then they remembered that "the gifts of God are without repentance." This may be considered an exceptional case, but it would soon cease to be so exceptional if parents realized as fully as they ought the privileges their children enjoy in the gospel. They might be very common if parents more frequently sought to lead their children into all that God has promised them.

Nor need such an experience be ephemeral. All religious life, if of the true stamp, would pass away soon if not nourished and protected. A true religious science, instead of shaking its head at the possibility of backsliding, should lift the note of warning to all Christians, assuring them that backsliding is one of the most natural things in the world. Christian graces, like valuable plants, require constant care and culture. Sin, like weeds, grows of itself. We seem to think that converted children should show a perfect Christian life, without breaks or defects. If they do not measure up to all our

expectations, we look sour at them, scold them, discourage them, and then conclude that we were right in believing that there is no need of trying to have the children converted. We will spend any amount of time on an old drunkard or other sinner, whose life at best is half wasted, while the children are allowed to die a spiritual death from pure neglect.

In a certain interior city of California there lived, some thirty years ago, a very eccentric man who belonged to the Church. He was very good at times, and always honest and truthful, but subject to occasional fits of intemperance. When they were passed he felt his humiliation severely and would plead most piteously to be permitted to remain in the Church. As that Church required total abstinence of all its members, the trial was very great. Many thought that he ought to be thrown overboard, and left to his fate. But better counsels prevailed, and he remained thus for several years. At last, on the occasion of

a revival-meeting, he seemed to become more established in the grace of God, and from that time remained faithful and exemplary for eleven years, when, old and feeble, he went literally shouting home. How that Church then rejoiced that they had borne with him so long! To show this, a large picture was prepared from a photograph of him, and hung on the wall of their lecture-room among those of the pastors who had served them in the past. Now this was right, and the more commendable since the man was very poor, and could be only a burden to the Church. But here comes in the thought, How many children this Church has saved from ever becoming drunkards, has developed them in the graces of the Christian life, and no especial attention has been called to it! Yet the latter is by far the most noteworthy of the two. Moreover, the same amount of patience, forbearance, and care would have saved to the Church and the world a dozen boys who were never looked after as they ought

to have been. Is not the blessed Master still saying, "These things ye ought to have done, but not to leave the other undone?"

We ought to do all we can for all sorts of sinners, but we ought to do more than we ever thought of doing for the children "whose angels do always behold the face of our Father in heaven." To go after hardened sinners, to the neglect of children, is the worst possible policy. The drum, the tambourine, the flag, the march on the street, the song and testimony, have done great good. When we shall enlist a like zeal in saving the children, we shall do a much greater good. There are women running after criminals and outlaws to the neglect of the proper training of their own children. If tears could find place in heaven, the angels would weep over a sight like this.

And suppose that, for any reason, an experience received in childhood should seem, in the estimation of others, to have no effect upon the lives of those who once enjoyed it. It

by no means follows that it is wholly lost. These early buds of promise may not produce the fruitage we desired, but they may remain buds, though covered by years of aftergrowth, and under favorable influences may burst forth and bear fruit to perfection. We can find in all the Churches numberless cases where a childhood experience, remembered though resisted, led, in after years, the souls that had received it back from their wanderings. It was such an experience, kept in memory though never related until manhood, that led the writer back from the barren fields of infidelity to the Savior he had forsaken.

With the consequences of our faithful and patient work we have absolutely nothing to do. They are God's care. It is our business to sow, not troubling ourselves with the thought as to how many of the plants will suffer blight or be eaten with worms. It is our duty to feed the lambs, not standing and hesitating with fear lest the wolf will devour them before they are

fully grown. If we do our duty, we have the blessed promise that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. That should be enough for us.

SECTION III.—JOINING THE CHURCH.

A flock of sheep without lambs will soon cease to be a flock at all. A congregation without children gives but little promise of perpetuity. A Church without children in its membership is yet more discouraging. May we not find right here the reason for the empty seats that yawn before the face of the ministry in our day? We have relegated the children to the Sunday-school, and both parents and pastors seem to think that is enough. But after awhile, and it does not take long, the children outgrow the Sunday-school, or at least they think they do, and then, having no habit of attending church, nor any taste for it, they naturally gravitate into the world, become godless, and probably skeptical, and are lost alike

to the Church and to their noblest destiny. Surely we have not overstated the evil which hangs above the heads of our youth who are not safely housed in early life within the fold of Jesus Christ.

There are two errors that should equally be avoided in this matter of children joining the Church. The first is to discourage it beyond the point of advantage. The second is to encourage it beyond the point of prudence. To refuse Church-membership to children who are able intelligently to enter upon its duties, and properly to meet its responsibilities, has a depressing effect, which, in many cases, leads to the abandoning of church-going, or, if not, may lead to the acceptance of error which will wreck the faith ultimately, and lead on to the darkness of unbelief. There are privileges in Church-membership peculiarly helpful to children. For illustration, take the ceremony of the Lord's Supper. It is very unwise, though often done, to admit children to this rite be-

fore they are members of the Church. If mature enough to take part in it intelligently, they are intelligent enough to be received into the Church. If not, there is a manifest degradation of the holy communion. The idea that there is no harm in giving a little piece of bread and a sip of grape-juice to this innocent child, even if he does not know why he takes it, is a plea in the very face of the Apostle Paul's injunction. What was that he condemned? Taking this as a common meal; eating and drinking as though ordinary food. What was the sin involved? Wherein did it bring condemnation? "Not discerning the Lord's body." The sacrament, in order to be spiritually profitable, should be taken with due examination, penitence, and faith. Without this it can not be used to edification. And if not to edification, it will most likely lead to the indulgence of superstitious notions very evil in their effects. Until it can be worthily received, it should be held before the children as a very

religious ceremony, of great advantage to them when old enough to receive it and when they are members of the Church. It would thus become an incentive to their earnest study of those things necessary for them to become intelligent Christians.

The conception that in becoming members they become a part of the body of Christ should be constantly held before them. The idea of Church-membership is generally held in too low esteem. This will need to be especially guarded in children. When they want to belong to Christ, when they are willing to consecrate their lives to God, then they will enter the Church with suitable ideas of its importance, and will be more likely to become a credit to their holy calling. Ward membership, such as we have seen belongs to baptized children, should be constantly held before them as a great privilege, and that ought to suffice until they can be properly received into responsible membership. But that ought not to

suffice any longer than is necessary to take this step intelligently. When children are brought into responsible membership without proper knowledge and experience, they are likely to fall away easily, and thus bring reproach upon childhood Church-membership. We have heard men and women say, "Yes, I belonged to the Church once; I was taken into it when a child, did not know what I was doing, and when I became old enough to understand the matter I did not care to continue." Now let it be readily granted that some who make such statements are simply finding an easy way of apologizing for their backsliding. Also, let it be granted that thousands who have been received into the Church in the same way have made most useful and valuable Christians. Yet there is force enough left in the statement to warrant caution. This step ought to be taken only after proper instruction.

For the reason that children vary in the degree of their intelligence at any particular

period of their early life, and from the fact that no one but the Infinite knows the time when moral responsibility belongs to a child, no particular age can be fixed as that in which the children should be received into the Church. The wisdom of those who have the matter in hand, as well as the advancement of the children in knowledge and experience, alone can determine this point. When a boy or girl desires this membership, and desires it enough to submit to careful and heart-searching instruction and examination to prepare for it, then they ought to be received. The observation of many years goes to prove that children so received make the most stable and useful members of the Church.

We may well conclude that the Church has no greater ground of rejoicing than when she is receiving these lambs into the fold. But is this really the way Churches and ministers look at the subject? Is there not a sneer often expressed something like this, "O, they have

received a lot of little children into the Church?" Could anybody suppose that the angels ever sneer over such a sight? Is it possible that even the devils sneer? More likely they mourn over the prospect of ruin to their kingdom. Only men sneer who are ignorant of God's plan, or who are so selfish as to see no gain for the cause of Christ in gathering into the Church those that can not help pay expenses. So we often see in reports of accessions to the Church, after a revival, that these accessions were nearly all adults. As though that were a matter of congratulation! On the contrary, it is a shame that the children do not predominate. It is a wonder how they were kept out. A revival, if the genuine work of the Spirit of God, would certainly stir the hearts of the children if any hearts were stirred at all. If encouraged they would be first in the fold. If discouraged, who that did it would want to give an account to the Judge in the last day, unless prepared to hear the crushing words,

"Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these, ye did it not unto me?"

SECTION IV.—SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

We have taken a hasty survey of this field for Church work and enterprise. We have seen, in some measure, what ought to be done. We now turn to consider in what ways we are trying to meet this demand upon our resources, and suggest such thoughts as may help to improve them.

There is a vast disproportion between the preparation children get for the secular pursuits, and the training they get for the highest interests of their being. Five days of the week, for from four to six hours, they are compelled by law to study the common branches of an English education. During this time no word is spoken on the subject of religion. No prayer is offered. No Scripture is read. This at least is true of most parts of the United States. We name this fact not to find fault with it. We can

easily see the impossibility of teaching religion by authority of State unless Church and State are united. This we hope may never be the case in this Nation. Let it then be conceded at once that the State is doing what it can to make intelligent citizens out of the children of the country. The question we need to consider here is, Are the Churches doing all they can, not only to make these children good citizens of the great Republic, but also members of the kingdom of heaven? Shall the secular week pass without these children receiving any instruction on the subject of religion? Manifestly this is out of all proportion. The higher is not thought of, while the lower is engaging all the attention. Where the family altar is sending up its daily incense it is not so bad. But we know that comparatively few who attend our public schools are from such homes. Is there nothing the Church can do for the others? We send missionaries to teach the children of heathen parents in foreign lands, and

we ought most certainly to do that; but shall we allow the children at our doors to be neglected? This we ought to do, and not leave the other undone. Admitting that, owing to prejudice, it would be impossible to reach those children whose home training is adverse to Christianity, are there not multitudes whose parents are favorable to Christianity, and yet give little or no instruction on the subject at home, that could be gathered in at least one day in the week for this purpose?

Every Church in the land ought to be open for an hour on Friday afternoon, for the purpose of religious instruction. If persons are employed who are "apt to teach," who can give the best instruction in an interesting way, large numbers would gladly assemble at the close of public schools. Can any pastor give an hour's work anywhere else to so great profit? If the pastor can not do it, then let the Church secure the offices of such as can. It is presumable that no one would object to the teaching by women

in such a position. If it cost a little money, the results would amply warrant the investment.

The Sunday-school is not sufficient for this work. It is of great value, and we shall properly consider it soon. But there are special reasons for this service that we contend for. First, it will exalt the subject in the minds of the children. It will be a constant reminder of the fact that something more is needed than a secular education. Friday afternoon has closed their school work for the week. Books and lessons can be laid aside for a little season, and their minds can be impressed with some important religious truth. If the custom became general, the schools might be closed a little earlier than usual for that purpose. Let Jews and Gentiles, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, have their churches open for this purpose. Let parents determine where their children shall be taught, if taught at all, for there should be nothing compulsory in it. If Churches were once aroused to the importance of the matter there

would be little trouble in carrying it forward, even if considerable money were required for the purpose.

Secondly, the instruction on such an occasion should be of quite a different kind from that of the Sunday-school. It should be of a more popular character. The lecture, with blackboard and other helps of such nature, could well be employed. It ought to be both interesting and edifying. The devotional exercises should be brief, and such as to enlist, as far as possible, the aid of the children. If a Cathechism is used, it should be as a part of the lecture, more time being given to make it plain, than to committing it to memory. There is great need of explaining religious truths to children. They will be very interesting if properly understood. Practical religion should have the right of way, yet sufficient of doctrinal teaching should be imparted to make them intelligent Christians. This scheme is not utopian. It has been tried in some places. and proved success-

ful. But as yet it has not extended as it ought, nor in any place has it reached the limit of its possibilities. These are beyond computation.

Nor is this an unreasonable demand to be made on the Churches. If children were required to give an hour of time each day for that purpose, it would not be out of proportion to its great importance. This much the Roman Catholics require in all their parochial schools, and even more than this. See with what tenacity she keeps her hold upon her followers, and learn the wisdom of beginning early to enlist the child mind in favor of set forms of religious truth. The Nation will never be wholly irreligious. This is contrary to the nature God has given us. We shall have some religion. Is it a small matter whether it be Christian or pagan? Is it a small matter whether it be Protestant or Roman Catholic? Is it a small matter whether it shall be Spiritualism, or Christian Science, or Mormonism? Behold how easily religious error, if only it gives reign to worldly desires

and pleasures, gathers its adherents, and then asks, Shall our people be forever a prey to such monstrosities of opinion and practice? If the answer be important, equally so must be the means by which the desired result can be gained. One thing is certain, if Protestants are remiss in winning the children, the Roman Catholics will not be. They know how to get the money and the talents for this work. They get the resources. They do the work. They will continue to do it. When shall the children of light be as wise in their generations? All heaven is interested in the response.

SECTION V.—SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

A great army of children are gathered into the Sunday-schools of America. How to make these schools most effective in securing the conversion of the children, and bringing them into the Church, constitutes one of the most important problems of the Christian world. We may be certain that we shall have these children

permanently in the Sunday-school only as we early secure their conversion and admission into the Church. It will be a suggestive study for pastors and other officials of the Sunday-schools to inquire into the proportions which exist between the number of members in the primary or infant classes, and those in the intermediate and more advanced classes. It will be found that the former will in nearly all cases greatly outnumber, at least proportionally, the latter. The writer has known not a few cases in which the number in the infant class greatly exceeded those in all the other classes combined. Why is this? The reason is not difficult to find. While the children are small the school is a novelty. It furnishes a place for their entertainment. The little songs, the hand and foot drill, the object-lesson, the blackboard, these furnish themes of interest to them, and serve to keep them in the school. In a few years these exercises are outgrown. Then they are expected to spend a half-hour in the serious

study of the Bible. Unless they have contracted a taste for religious conversation and inquiry, or unless they have parents to care for their continued attendance, other inducements keep them from the Sunday-school, and they are lost to the Church, at least for years; many of them forever.

Again it will be found that there is a great preponderance of girls in the Sunday-school, as compared with boys. The girls have not the same liberty to roam the streets, the woods, or fields that boys have. Thus they find the Sunday-school a relief from what might otherwise be a wearisome Sabbath. In this way the foundation is laid, at least in part, for the preponderance of women in the Church of God. Christianity should be very grateful for the women who stand by the ordinances of the Church. It is a compliment to the purity of its teachings that women are so generally drawn to it. But men have souls as well as women. Their example and labors are greatly needed in fur-

thering the cause of Christ. How to capture them, and how to keep them, is one of the great questions of the Church. We shall keep the boys, and more certainly keep the girls also, if in Sunday-school work we learn how to bring them early to Christ, and get them safely folded in the Church. This should be the constant aim of all Sunday-schools. How shall it be done? Consider carefully the following points:

1. Keep a close and intimate relation between the Sunday-school and the public congregation. If the alternative were presented as to whether all the children should attend the public worship of God and have the Sunday-school abolished; or whether the children should only attend the Sunday-school, and be left to obtain all their religious impressions from the Sunday-school only, a good argument is an easy accomplishment in favor of the first proposition. The Church is the final earthly home of all Christians. Adults will rarely be found seeking instruction in the Sunday-school. It will be in

the Church or nowhere. If they attend the Sunday-school it will be as officers and teachers, and this will call out but a small part of the Church. The exceptions are only enough to prove the rule. Fortunately the alternative is no necessity. On the contrary, the Sunday-school may be made a means of winning the love of the scholars for the services of the sanctuary.

Take another view of the matter. Children who attend the school and not the Church will soon drop out of the former, and, finding no interest or attraction in the latter, they will lounge at home, or, what is worse, find recreation elsewhere. Thus thousands are led from the Sunday-school to join the great army of non-church-going people of whom our cities, and even country places, are full. The habit of church-going can not be too early, nor too persistently formed. By every possible means and device this should be accomplished.

It is a common objection to this view of the case, that it is asking too much of the children

to attend both Church and Sunday-school in the same day, especially when these follow each other in quick succession. Let us look at this. If both exercises are together, they would consume about three hours. They ought not to consume more. Say from half-past nine in the morning to half-past twelve, or from eleven in the morning to two in the afternoon. This is exactly the equivalent of one-half day's session of the public school. And this last ordeal, generally duplicated, must be passed by the children for five consecutive days each week. Moreover the Sunday-school is far less severe than the day-school, in that its exercises are constantly changing, and besides an interval common to both, there is, generally in the Sunday-school, a change of seat and a change of room as well. Now it is absurd, on the very face of things, that parents should object to the Church service for this reason, but never allow of an objection from their children on account of the strain produced by attending the

day-school. It only indicates, as we have seen before, that we are constantly giving the preference to the secular rather than the religious in importance. The real fact is that the objection would be easily overcome if parents were only themselves intent on the highest moral development of their children. It is very possible that the objection more frequently originates with the parents than with the children.

But if this be true that it is asking too much of the children to remain so long on Sunday in the services of the sanctuary, then let the time be divided. Let the school be placed in the afternoon. In large cities this hour has been found the best for gathering the largest number. The most useful Sunday-schools the writer has ever known have met at half-past two in the afternoon. It may be a question whether this would not be the prevailing hour but for the indolence of Sunday-school workers, or worse, their desire to spend the afternoon in a selfish and worldly way.

How can the Sunday-school promote the attendance of the children upon the services of the Church? Much might be done by the superintendent. The writer once heard the superintendent of a large Sunday-school in Philadelphia give what he considered a model invitation to the school to attend Church. He first told them how delighted he was to see so many of them at Church that morning. He told them he was proud of the good order that they observed, and the close attention they gave to the words spoken by their beloved pastor. He hoped to see a much larger number at Church the next Sabbath. He also asked them to come at night, so far as they reasonably could. He said he had something good to tell them. The pastor was beginning that night a very important series of sermons in which he was sure the children would be greatly interested. It is very seldom that anything like this is heard in Sunday-school. The more is the pity. Is it not true of the majority of superintendents that

they never invite the children to Church from one year's end to another? Would it not be well for pastors to stir them up to this manifest duty?

Teachers may be very helpful in this particular if they will but undertake it. It ought to be a part of Sunday-school instruction. Many lessons are suggestive of thought on the subject. But even if it is not there, it can be brought in as a part of the teaching. Happy the Sunday-school scholars who have teachers that think for them, that forget nothing that is needful for their advancement in the Christian life.

The writer once had a Junior League the superintendent of which spent about twenty minutes each session in getting the children to tell what the pastor had said in his sermon that morning. Each one was asked to state one thing, no order being required. It was astonishing to see how eager they were to get their opportunity to speak. If any one did not give the

point correctly, a half-dozen hands were up in an instant for a chance to make it right. The pastor took great delight in hearing his sermon repreached by these children. This League met on Sabbath afternoons.

But after all, the principal responsibility must ever rest upon parents. Early let them take their children to Church, seek to interest them in what they hear, talk with them about it when they get home, see how much they remember of it, emphasize anything that was of a practical nature; thus a taste can be cultivated for the sermon and for religious subjects. This, too, will not only get the children into the habit of attending Church, but also of listening to the sermon, and thus prevent their falling into the disgusting practice of whispering and laughing in the sanctuary of God.

2. The matter of personal consecration and conversion should be constantly kept before them. This may be done,—

(1) By a warm, earnest exhortation at the

close of every session. It should be brief, but to the one point. Telling laughable stories, or giving long, dreary talks about the subject, are alike out of place. If there is no way of being practical without wandering from the lesson, then wander from the lesson. Better save a soul "out of season," than to let it die for want of attention. If a man does not know better than to waste such a golden opportunity, he should never have the second chance. A Sunday-school superintendent once said to the writer, while visiting a school, "Will you tell the children of Jesus and his salvation for five minutes when the lesson is finished?" It was an admirable way of asking help. The man who would betray such a trust ought never to be permitted to carry the Lord's message. A sensible man would say nothing on an invitation of that kind, or he would say something to the point.

(2) A good earnest prayer-meeting should be often, if not always, held at the close of the

Sunday-school. Attendance should not be pressed too far, for if they stay too much against their will they will hardly be benefited by the service. It they choose not to stay, let no unkind word be spoken to their disparagement. In these prayer-meetings let all the exercises be brief, pointed, earnest, practical. Above all, they should be sympathetic. It requires loving hearts to bring children to their loving Savior.

(3) Teachers should have the conversion of their scholars on their hearts. To this end they should prepare the lesson. To this end they should have a deep personal interest in every one of their scholars. To this end they should pray every day for Divine aid in making themselves and the truth they utter alike attractive to their scholars. Geography and history ought to be taught in the lesson as they may be required. There is a certain interest in subjects of that nature that the children will be easily inclined to consider. But the

study of a teacher should ever be to lead up from these, as quickly as possible, to something more practical and spiritual. Teachers are sometimes found who will not rest until their scholars are safe in the Church.

3. Great care should be taken in the selection of teachers. To be a Sunday-school teacher should be no careless undertaking. In some communities unconverted people have organized Sunday-schools for the study of the Bible. Nothing but praise should be spoken of such efforts. Still, it must be certain that such efforts are very defective, for how can any one teach Christianity properly unless he has felt the power in his own life? As well expect that a Church could be permanently built up in the faith of the gospel by means of a minister who knew nothing of its saving power. But some will say such teachers are very hard to find. This is a lamentable truth. But it ought not to be. There are thousands of Church-members who are languishing in

their own religious life for want of just such a work. If they could be persuaded to talk faith to children for a half hour each week, and exercise faith enough during the balance of the time to make their work successful, they would soon set fire to their own souls and become the advance guard of a new era in Christian enterprise. A little more piety; a little more consecration; a little less worldliness; a little less love of ease. O, how the conversion of the world tarries for these Pentecostal gifts! But meantime let this thought be well considered: If as many of the right kind of teachers can not be secured as needed, better take less and have them of the right kind. Better have twenty boys in a class with one teacher in charge who can win their love and confidence, than to have four classes of five boys each, with four teachers who know no better than to fritter away the precious half hour of Sunday-school work, possibly leaving the boys worse for having gone.

SECTION VI.—FROM SUNDAY-SCHOOL TO CHURCH.

The way from the Sunday-school to the Church should be well traveled. We often hear the Sunday-school spoken of as the nursery of the Church. If such it is, the replanting should take place as early as safety will admit. If the idea could once prevail that it was the especial work of the Sunday-school to help children into the Church, and that the Sunday-school was the most fertile soil to sow for this very reaping, then we might get at the next important step in the road to success, the children and adults of the Church could better be turned into the Sunday-school for effective work. Turn children Church-members into the Sunday-school for work? Yes. What better field for boys and girls who want to be useful? Are there not refractory boys and careless girls in the Sunday-school? What better help can a teacher need than to have children sit by the side of such, and, by good example, induce them to learn? Thus we

should pour the Sunday-school into the Church, and then, again, turn the Church back into the Sunday-school, until both are leavened with the gospel of truth and enterprise.

This is by no means the prevailing idea. In many schools there is a foolish fear that the workers will be considered narrow and bigoted if anything is said about joining the Church. A greater mistake could scarcely be made than this. Catholicity is indeed a subject that should be thoroughly taught in Sunday-school. References to other Churches should always be kindly and magnanimous. In teaching truth it is by no means necessary to denounce those who teach the same truths in a little different manner. But if a Church has a form of faith it ought to be taught, at least in its essential features, to the children of the Sunday-school. Not in a controversial spirit, but positively, plainly, and from a practical standpoint. If the Church has a history, that history should have place in the instruction of

the school. If a certain spirit pervades the Church, that spirit will, and ought to, pervade the Sunday-school. The Sunday-school is a part of the Church, and, under the supervision of the Church, it is intended to build up the Church. If people send their children to the Sunday-school, they ought to understand that, as a natural consequence, the children will be gathered into the Church.

The writer has received scores of children into the Church whose parents were not members of any Church. But he always secured the parents' consent. Very seldom did he find any difficulty in so doing. A candid presentation of the case was generally found sufficient. Often parents have said, with tears in their eyes: "I know it is better that my children should belong to the Church. It would be better if I did. But I would not lay a straw in their way. On the contrary, I will do all I can to encourage them." In one instance the son of a widow was converted, and wished to

join the Church. The writer called upon her, and found that she was not at all in sympathy with his doing so. For some reason she was bitter against the Church, and never attended services. After some conversation, she was asked if she would positively refuse to allow her son to be received. She answered, "No; but I shall try to persuade him from doing it." It was finally agreed that his name might be called, and, if he wanted to do so, he might go forward and be received with several others about whom there was no question. The boy was there, and the mother sat by his side. When the name of the boy was called, he arose, with no sign of disapproval on the part of the mother, and he was duly received into the Church. It was the mother's first appearance at church. Who can tell what the outcome of such an event may be? But some will ask, "Is it probable that boys taken into the Church under such circumstances will remain faithful?" Of course, there is more danger than when parents

lead their children both by precept and example; but this responsibility rests upon the parents. The Church can not consistently neglect the children because the parents do. The fact of danger should only increase the vigilance of the Church in looking after the children so intrusted to its care. Several instances have been known to the writer where most excellent working Christians have been thus developed from families not otherwise religious.

The following incident occurred in San Francisco a few years ago: A little girl about ten years old gave her name to the teacher of her class in Sunday-school as a candidate for membership. The pastor soon found that the parents never attended church, but allowed their child to do so because she wanted to. They offered no objection, and, after the usual preparation required by the pastor, she was received. Some months later an older sister was taken suddenly very sick, and, being incited thereto by this little Christian, sent for the

pastor, made her peace with God, and died soon after. Still later a married sister from a mountain town, visiting her parents, was induced by this little worker to attend a revival service, where she, too, was converted, and returned to work for the Savior in her own neighborhood. Still later the terrible scourge of diphtheria invaded that family, and took our little Church-member home. She had tried in vain, while living, to induce her parents to attend church. On one occasion of this kind her mother said: "You ought not to ask your papa to go to church. You know he works hard every day, and needs to go to bed early on Saturday night, and he never rises early enough on Sunday morning to get there in time." The little one was wiser than all her teachers. She answered quickly: "Mamma, you know that you quite often attend the theater, and, when you do, you never get home until nearly midnight; yet papa goes to work the next day. Now church never lasts beyond nine o'clock. Why

can not he go there better than to the theater?" Though silenced by this pleading, they were not persuaded. However, when she had gone to her home in heaven, they were drawn, by an almost irresistible influence, to the Church their darling had joined. One service was enough to convince them of their need of salvation, and they too were converted and joined the Church. Did you never read, "A little child shall lead them?"

Children sometimes wander from one Sunday-school to another. Even children of religious parents are sometimes allowed to do this. If parents desire to keep their children in their own Church, they should insist on their attending its Sunday-school. If they do not, they have no reason to complain if they are gathered into the Church whose Sunday-school they attend. A young girl was induced by a friend to become a scholar in a school of another Church from that to which her mother belonged. The mother gave her consent, suppos-

ing it was a small matter so she went somewhere to Sunday-school. Two or three years passed, when the daughter told her she was going to unite with that Church. The mother tried persuasion, but in vain. Nothing but a postive declaration that she must not would suffice, and that the mother feared to do. She went to the pastor of the Church her child proposed to join. She asked him if he would not use his influence in getting her daughter to unite with the Church of her mother. The answer she received was both dignified and correct: "Madam, you allowed your daughter to attend our Sunday-school. It is our duty, and we shall certainly do it, to receive our Sunday-school scholars into the Church as soon as we judge they are prepared for that step. If you trusted your daughter to our instruction in the Sunday-school, why do you object to our instructing her in the Church? Now I shall not interfere in any way to prevent this girl of yours becoming a member of our Church. I

shall certainly call her name, and, if she comes forward, I shall receive her." And so he did, and only did his duty in that respect. Yet there are many reasons why parents and children should belong to the same Church. Rarely do circumstances warrant any other disposal of the members of the family circle.

One care should be taken in receiving children into the Church from the Sunday-school. Children are easily affected. An earnest appeal that will start a few may draw a multitude after them. This wholesale rush into the Church is often attended with very little idea of what is being done. In the same thoughtless manner there may, by and by, be a like stampede to the world again. Let the appeals be made, but leave time for reflection afterward. A good plan is to receive them on the recommendation of their teachers, leaders of the classes, or from their parents. Teachers, watching the conduct of their scholars, will do well to seek a private interview with such

as show evident signs of deep personal interest on the subject of piety. At these times they should be asked for leave to present their names to the pastor as candidates for membership. It ought, however, to be a part of Sunday-school instruction to show the scholars the advantage of being early "planted in the house of the Lord," and if on such occasions any should wish to take that step, the teacher ought to encourage them in so doing. Nothing can ever be more appropriate than for parents, with cordial consent of their children, to ask the pastor to take the names of their children for this purpose. If parents, pastors, teachers, and officers of the Sunday-school would co-operate together in this work there might be a constant influx of children from the Sunday-school going into the Church, and making the most useful members the Church can possibly have, though we may have to wait a few years before these shall become of much value in supporting the finances of the organization.

Chapter VI.

THE MINISTRY.

Though the ministry is a part of the Church, and might have been properly treated under that head, yet, because of its great importance, we shall give it a separate chapter.

None but parents should ever get so nigh the hearts of children as the pastor. They should love him and trust him. He should be as a father to them. It should be his ambition to win their love, and his prayer and study to hold it. It is very doubtful if any man who does not love children, and has, at least in some measure, the gift of winning their love, and skill in teaching them and leading them, is ever truly called to this sacred office. Observe, to love children is not enough. A minister should know how to win their love. We have seen

men who were ever doting upon children, making a great ado over them whenever they come into their presence, but who, in turn, repelled these children from them. Their very efforts to draw them somehow drove them away. The study of human nature is of unspeakable value in this department of ministerial labor. Some children can be captured at sight. Others can only be won by a slow siege. But, however the thing is done, it ought to be done, indeed, must be done, if a pastor expects to be successful in building up his Church out of the best material. We shall treat ministerial relations to children under four heads: pastoral visiting, pulpit instruction, class teaching, and Church receptions.

SECTION I.—PASTORAL VISITING.

Richard Baxter, author of "The Reformed Pastor," spent much of his time catechising children. By a preconcerted arrangement, he spent whole days every week in receiving

families for this purpose. To each was given a specified period of time, and the catechetical instruction included both parents and children. This practice he strongly recommended to others. But we must remember that he was not only pastor of the parish, but he was, in an important sense, also an officer of the law. For much of his life he was pastor of a State Church. His teaching and example are of worth to us only in the enthusiasm we should draw from the exceedingly useful life he lived and the great success which crowned his labors. If ministers claim that they have no time for pastoral work among the families of their charges, we can point to this man, who began his ministry with very insufficient preparation, but who became a scholar of high attainments in every department of his calling. He became a preacher of profound abilities. His "Reformed Pastor" was but the elaboration of one text from which he was asked to preach. He also became a writer whose works will be

read as long as the English language lasts. Yet this busy man and scholar spent his whole time, from early in morning until late in the afternoon, in this important work of teaching the members of his flock. And he repeated this several days of each week. Though, from changes of circumstances, a minister can not go at this work as Baxter did, he ought to spend much time visiting his people. By no other use of his time can he hope to secure so large a measure of success.

In dealing with children, in these visits, there are two extremes he should carefully avoid. The first is, such familiarity, such frivolity, and such carelessness of speech as will make the introduction of religion an incongruity. To be glad to see their pastor because he is such a good fellow, so full of fun, and because he never troubles them on the subject of religion, is to lose the distinctive characteristics of his high calling for those of a buffoon. Many a poor compliment has been

paid pastors on this subject. Sometimes these compliments are accompanied, in their absence, by remarks that would make their ears tingle if they could hear them. A strange compliment to pay to a man whose life work is to save souls, to say that he gets so interested in worldly conversation and amusements as to forget to say anything to his flock about their souls. Strange commendation for a minister to say that he "loves children very much," but, as a matter of fact, does not love them enough to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the contrary, there is a kind of stiff propriety, a dignified gravity, a social distance, savoring of Pharasaic righteousness, that naturally repels children, and makes them fear to come nigh the pastor. Such a disposition puts a barrier around the minister which keeps the children from going to him for counsel and aid when they most need it. There is no occasion for going to either extreme. The pastor may be good company, cheerful and

pleasant, and yet he may be both reverent and instructive. He may make himself very attractive without for a moment forfeiting the essential features of a wise and competent teacher of righteousness. Let him learn how to do it. It is a lesson on which his success in the ministry largely depends. Look again at the tender Shepherd. The children were not afraid of him. They came to him. When surrounded by envious foes who were plotting his death, these little ones were all about him, singing hosannas to his name. He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them; but note, he never forgot religion—he "blessed them."

But the main thing to be insisted on here is that the pastor shall visit much; that in his visits he shall not forget the children; that he shall learn to win their love and confidence; that he shall be able to lead them to Christ; that he shall build them up in the grace of Christ; that he shall early seal them to God

under the vows of Church-fellowship; that he shall teach them how to work for the Savior he has taught them to love, and in every way become a faithful under-shepherd to the lambs of the fold. Does a man covet a long ministry in any place? Let him get hold of the children in the way above indicated. Parents will gladly defer their own choice for the sake of a man who is evidently leading their children successfully in the path of life. This can not be done wholly by preaching, though that has its place, and shall soon be considered. In order to reach the highest measure of efficiency he must know them at home. He must get near their hearts by personal contact, and yet so manage that personal and intimate relation as to draw them Christward and heavenward. This is an ideal hard for many to realize who enter upon this work. All may not expect to realize it in the same degree; but the ideal is good, and because good, it should be constantly before the eyes of every one who takes upon him the sacred

ministry. If he can not succeed in some measure along this line, he may well doubt his call. Is it likely that the Divine Master will choose those to feed the flock that know not how to take care of the lambs?

SECTION II.—PULPIT INSTRUCTION.

How the pastor shall treat the children from the pulpit is an important question, and perhaps one of the most difficult to answer in a satisfactory manner. With many it is no difficult question, for it is never asked. Possibly a whole life is spent in ministerial work without the thought coming into a man's head as to whether he is to say anything of especial benefit to the children of his public congregation. How can we expect the children to love the services of the sanctuary unless they hear and understand something that is said in the sermon? Should not every pastor bear them in mind when preparing for the pulpit? To the question, How shall he adapt his pul-

pit instruction to their needs? the answer is of less importance than the question. The pastor that honestly thinks of his children, and earnestly prays to be of service to them in preaching, will certainly reach them in some way. But we offer some suggestions that may be of use to the preacher:

1. Short sermons or sermonettes. This is a practice successfully followed by many. A short sermon, from five to ten minutes long, is used as a prelude to the regular sermon, or is introduced as a part of the opening exercises of the morning hour. Some make no effort to have these short sermons bear upon the topic of the discourse. A less number do. These are right in their judgment, but select much the most difficult manner. It will require much less work to prepare something for the children, simply to interest and profit them, than to be compelled to arrange a line of thought on the subject of discourse, and yet not have it interfere too much with the larger preparation.

However, the advantage of this method is so great that it compensates for the extra work, and will be readily adopted by those who stop to consider the matter from a practical point of view. Let the sermonette be simply a relish for the sermon. Whether a text is announced or not, let there be a homogeneity between the sermon and the talk, if we may use this form of speech. Indeed, the children may well be told that the same subject is to be continued in the sermon, and invite their special attention to it. This will help to avoid a danger that is almost inseparable to the short sermon, and which we now proceed to consider:

The danger is that children will suppose that the short sermon is all the service in which they have any interest. In some instances the children wait until their sermon is preached, and then retire. Another danger is that, because only a few ministers are in the habit of preaching short sermons for children, and as pastorates are generally short in most

Churches, the children no more than get accustomed to the practice before one comes that does not do it, and they never form the habit of regular attendance at church, which, after all, is the most desirable thing to be secured. Sooner by far leave out the sermonette than to encourage them in the thought that they have no interest in what the preacher says beyond what is directly addressed to them. The sermonette, if used to center thought on the theme of the sermon, to arouse and awaken their interest in the heavier part of the service, may be a splendid device. With this idea, the preacher may resort to many things for the purpose intended. Some object-lesson, a well-told story (if only the story be not trifling), even the blackboard may be of good service in turning thought into the direction which he proposes to make effective in the work of the hour. If this practice is wisely followed, if it simply is made an event of interest to accustom the children to the public service,

it may not only be of much profit to those for whom it is intended, but a matter of interest to the whole congregation.

2. Another method of making the pulpit profitable to children is by preaching a sermon especially for their benefit once in a while. No better use can be made of the pulpit than to preach a sermon, once a month, or once a quarter, especially to children. If carefully prepared and sensibly delivered, it will be attractive, not only to the children, but almost equally so to adults. It will also serve to remind the children that they are not forgotten by their pastor. To the preacher it will be a means of helping to develop a transparent style of pulpit discourse, no small advantage to any minister of the gospel. This practice is warranted even where the sermonette to children is an every Sabbath event, though, of course, the latter should be dispensed with on the occasion of a whole sermon being designed particularly for children.

And now a few words in reference to the manner of addressing children. Two extremes are to be avoided. The first is the extreme of simplicity. Some men, in an effort to get down to the capacity of children, actually make themselves silly. Children are made to laugh, not because of the preacher's humor, but because of his becoming so ridiculous. The writer once heard a minister begin a speech before a large audience of bright children with these words, "And now, children, I am going to say a few simple things in a simple way." He did it. Children and adults alike were disgusted with the stupidity of his utterances. Children like to have some confidence placed in their ability. They will honor an appreciation of their intelligence. For this reason children naturally dislike a patronizing style. To address them as if you knew it all, and that in getting thought within their reach you must be very unlike yourself, is positively offensive. Do not condescend to them. Be like them in

the sense that they see you treat them as if on terms of equality. Trust them and talk sense.

On the other hand, the successful preacher to children will be careful not to shoot above the mark. He should have just as fresh, original thought as he would have if preaching to adults, but he should be careful to make it plain. Above all, he should illustrate it in a forcible manner. He must take time enough in preparation to be brief in delivery—a most important rule in all homiletical preparation. Long sermons are often—by no means always—brief productions. Circuitous speech is often the result of one's not knowing exactly what he is going to say. The man who wearies the children in getting one idea into their heads, even if it should be a good one, will not succeed in getting them to listen for many more. Nor will he do much better with the average listener of more mature years. A model children's sermon will tax the best brains in the

ministry. It is not an easy undertaking by any means. The man who sets about it to get rid of work, had better at once conclude that he is excused from the duty of doing it at all.

3. And now we come back to the thought that should never be forgotten by any pastor: The children ought to have an interest in every sermon that is preached. Children need the same food that nourishes their parents. It is true that at first they are fed on milk, but at an early date they need more substantial food. Out of the same dish the father serves the whole family. Only, in the case of the very small ones, he cuts the meat fine, crumbs up their bread, and they eat with a spoon instead of a knife and fork. Now, just as the children crave food, so they crave knowledge. How many the questions they put to their busy, and perhaps impatient parents! We should not forget that their minds need nourishment by gaining knowledge just as much as their bodies need food for growth and strength.

They may be awkward in putting questions. They may annoy by what we deem needless inquiries, but we had better patiently answer them than to dwarf their expanding minds. Almost anything that will be interesting to a man will be interesting to a child, if the child but grasp the thought. This is just as true of religion as of any other source of knowledge, and probably more so. Children want to know much that they can not know, because not known to earth. But there is no reason why that should be withheld from them that can be, with care and patience, imparted to them. No sermon should ever be preached that would not be interesting to children if only they understood it. We are very apt to underestimate the ability of children to understand a sermon. We discourage them by telling them that these things are too high for them, instead of leading them into mental activity by such explanations and illustrations as will make truth plain to their understandings.

Simplicity always becomes the pulpit. The preacher should always avoid words difficult to be understood. And this, not merely for the children's sake, but for the sake of those in the congregation who will apprehend them no better. If abstruse or difficult terms are used, let the preacher stop long enough to show what he means. This he can do by explanation or illustration. To make a display of learning is offensive anywhere; in the pulpit it is a sin against God. The preacher who does it is not only unfit to preach to children, he is unfit to preach the gospel to anybody. How unlike the Master, who came down to our low estate, and became like us, sin excepted! How unlike the Apostle Paul, who became all things to all men that he might gain as many as he could for his Master!

Mark you, there is a great difference between being plain and simple, easily understood, and being commonplace and ineffective in thought. Shallowness is not at all neces-

sary to clearness. You can see the bottom of a deep stream if only the water be perfectly transparent. Pedantry is bad enough; feebleness is no better. Good, stimulating thought, important and interesting truth, held up in a transparent light—this should be the highest purpose of every preacher in every sermon. Such preaching will be found always adapted to the minds of children. But again, it will be very helpful to the children occasionally to carve a little for their especial benefit. Make a thought a little more clear for their sakes. Illustrate appropriately for their particular profit. Notice them occasionally, and ask their attention to something you are about to say. This should not be done too frequently, nor should it be neglected too long. Let the children know that they are not forgotten by the pastor, either in the preparation or delivery of a sermon. In return, the children will not forget their pastor. They will be glad to hear him. Their expanding minds and growing

spirits will become more and more fitted to receive the word of instruction and edification, while their lives will become more and more meet for the Master's use.

SECTION III.—CHILDREN'S CLASSES.

By children's classes we mean such meetings of children as are of direct spiritual profit to them. It is difficult for children to attend the church prayer-meeting, and if they generally did, that would not quite cover the case. They need a special means of their own—no difference what it is called. It may be a Junior Society of Christian Endeavor, a Junior League, or, more simply, a children's class or a children's-meeting. Whatever it is called, the object should be the same. That object is less general than the instruction of the Sunday-school. It should be less popular than the instruction after the public school, if such instruction is given. Its central thought should be devotion. It should be a place for prayer

and testimony. These classes should be organized and controlled by the pastor. He will do well to secure such aid as he can trust to help him in the work, but he should be frequently, if not generally, with them. He will find no better use for the time required. Van Oosterzee, the Dutch writer on practical theology, says a minister ought to spend from seven to eight hours every week in teaching and catechising children. Half of that time, faithfully applied by the pastors of America, would double the membership of the Churches in a single generation.

A reason for the work here named is found in the fact that children can help each other by "assembling themselves together." As we have seen, they can lead each other astray. Children have a powerful influence on each other for good or evil. Why not use this influence for all the good we can get out of it? Social fellowship will be found as profitable among them as among adults. We offer the

following suggestions, resulting from many years of work and observation:

1. The children's class should not be attended by any except those of serious minds. Thoughtless, careless ones should be very welcome elsewhere in children's gatherings, but never here. A little laughing and whispering will destroy all the good that would otherwise be gained. The sole attraction should be religion. The children that hunger for spiritual life are those that will be satisfied with these meetings.

2. A great deal depends upon the teacher or leader. Some lay members, especially women, will do better than the pastor, at least the average incumbent of that office. For this cause it will be better not to have too many of these classes. One large, successful one should be preferred to two or more less interesting in character. If more than one, let them be divided according to age, rather than according to sex, unless in rare cases.

In the selection of teachers it is easy to make a serious mistake. To make selection from the ability of the leader to speak would be a possible mistake. Too much talk from the leader is by no means desirable. On the other hand, a shrewd leader could make his own defect in this regard turn to the advantage of his work. The following incident occurred under the pastoral oversight of the writer: On assuming charge of a Church, he was told that a certain leader ought not to be continued, as he lacked every element of a successful worker in such a field. The pastor was thus led to suspect a near trouble in getting rid of an inefficient officer of the Church. It turned out quite differently from what he feared. The more he looked into this man's work, the more he became convinced that he was the right man for the place. His principal qualification was that he knew how to turn his defects to the advantage of his class. He could not sing; hence he had a plea that secured the services

of some larger children who would not otherwise have gone. They came, and, coming, were benefited, and were also learning to do work for God. He was not a fluent speaker, and knew it well. So he induced the class to use more time in prayer and testimony, greatly to their advantage. His one great fitness for the work was that he had a great love of children, and knew how to make them know it. He was willing to make sacrifices of time and money for their profit and enjoyment. He loved the Savior, and this they knew also. Thus he drew them to his Master. The pastor had the pleasure of receiving many children into the Church, prepared for that important event by this wise but illiterate leader of children.

While, as we have seen, the paramount object of such meetings is the spirituality of the children, a little time may be used with the catechism. This should be turned to practical advantage, and not allowed to consume too

much time. The Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and, if in a Church that uses it, the baptismal covenant, may come in as an incident to give a little variety to the exercises. But prayer and testimony should never be left out of these services. It is not difficult to get serious children to offer sentence prayers, and even to enlarge upon that in these meetings. To learn to confess Christ in all places is a necessity to a vigorous Christian life. The children can not begin this lesson too soon. To repeat a passage of Scripture learned during the week may be a profitable use of a portion of time, and would come in very appropriately in the giving of testimonies. To learn a text, supplied by the leader, to become the motto for the week, is also a good thing. Above all else, they should be taught the way of faith and urged to a life of consecration.

3. Observe the following rules:

(1) Do not keep them too long. It ought

not to exceed an hour, and, unless very large, a less period will do. A good rule for a sermon is also a good rule for leaders of these classes, "Send them away longing rather than loathing." There will be times when the leader is unusually drawn out, and when the children are unusually interested. Stop before the interest dies. Better let it stop at highest pitch than allow it to die out. If, on the other hand, the meeting drags, as it will sometimes, hasten to make a good impression; if possible, change the order, cut short the service, spend more time in handshaking and private conversation, and let them go without carrying with them the memory of a dull meeting.

(2) Frequently vary the exercises. This can be done by the various means indicated above. Yet wisdom is needed here. If especial interest is manifested on some point, give it more time. "Strike while the iron is hot" is a rule from which others than blacksmiths can profit.

(3) Get them at work. We can always find something for children to do about the house, the farm, the workshop, or even the marts of trade. Why may we not be as wise in finding work for children about the Church? Induce them to bring others in, and thus make these classes recruiting stations for the Church. Of course, they must be careful to have their recruits know the nature of the meeting. Give them any work to do for Church or Sunday-school. Thus they will soon learn the luxury of working for Jesus—the luxury he experienced when he said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

SECTION IV.—RECEIVING CHILDREN INTO THE CHURCH.

The measure of the pastor's responsibility in receiving persons into the Church differs in different denominations, but in all of them it is considerable. The qualifications of mem-

bers, their proofs of spiritual fitness, their adaptations to enjoy and promote the good fellowship of the Church—all these things fall upon the pastor with a weight that they do not have on any other person, nor even on the combined officiary of the society. Care should always be exercised toward all who come into the Church, but no greater care in the case of children than others, unless by care we mean more time and preparation for that event. In the ancient Church even adults were required to remain in the list of catechumens for a long time before admission even to the presence of the Church in the reception of the holy communion. All this time they were under instruction, and it was required that much should be learned by them before admission to the Church. In most Protestant Churches any process of probation is dicarded, and in all of them the instruction administered is only such as is given to the whole Church. Here is one place where the process of receiv-

ing children should differ from that of receiving adults. They are of an age and condition when time may, and ought, to be taken to prepare them well for the responsibility they are assuming. Let the following points be considered:

1. In regard to experience.

(1) Unconverted children ought not to be received into the Church in other than ward membership. But what are the proofs of conversion? Let us examine this question with great care. It is unreasonable to suppose some great conflict eventuating in a wonderful and sudden change; at least this will ever be the exception rather than the rule. Most of the remarkable experiences that men relate would never have occurred but for their own fault. Either they sinned very long and deeply before seeking Christ, or they were stubborn, willful, and rebellious while seeking him, or some other factor entered into their experience, or they had never had it to tell. None of these

influences can operate in any large degree in the case of children. So we ought to conclude that, as a rule, a less manifest experience will be found in children than in adults. Then, again, we find that difference of temperament, habits of thinking and acting, the circumstances under which the experience came to the soul, these and other causes produce different effects in the conversion of adults. There is no reason to doubt that these will produce similar results in children. It is the height of folly to lay down an ideal experience for adults, and require all to conform to it. It is even a greater folly to pursue a similar course with children. We have known great harm done to children and young people by persons foolishly telling them just how they must feel if they are truly converted. Children who have been taught from earliest childhood to pray, who have never really intended to reject Christ, but have always trusted him, loved him, and desired to please him, these may pass imperceptibly into

a life of faith and into the fruition of God's favor and smile. These would never have a crisis in their lives such as is commonly called "experiencing religion." This not only may be so, but in most instances, if not in all, will be so, with nearly, if not all, children raised as they ought to be.

(2) It is of infinitely more importance that adults and children alike should know how to secure an experience than to be able to tell one. It is better to own the soil than to be able to reap a crop from it. Experience should be an every-day occurrence to the Christian. It should be the healthy and normal outgrowth of a life of faith. If one learns the way of consecration, faith, and confession, he will have learned to meet all the demands of the Christ-life. He has learned to walk with God. Such a one might attain to the highest sainthood, even if he never knew what some are pleased to call a rich religious experience. These points are vital questions of the Christian life.

To settle them properly in the case of children is to settle their meetness for membership in the Church of God.

(3) We have seen one side of this subject of converted children. There is another, no less important. There are certain great privileges inseparable from a truly converted life. These the children ought to know and enjoy.

(a) The witness of the Spirit. Paul's explanation of it is, in the highest sense of the word, appropriate to children. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." So in the words of John, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." This idea of confidence, of assurance, of peace, this is fundamental to the Christian joy, and one of the surest proofs of conversion.

(b) A sure proof of a true conversion is to be found in the pure life that follows—fol-

lows as a fruit of faith and the operation of the Spirit of God. Some say we should live without sin. That depends on what we mean by the word sin. It is far safer, more in accordance with facts, observation, and, what is far more to the point, in accordance with Scripture, to say that we ought to live without condemnation. Children can, by the grace of God, so live. They ought to be taught so to live. Some say that children are born regenerated. This is no place for controversy. It is enough to know that evil soon appears in the lives of all children. We do not stop to say to what extent this evil may be eradicated in conversion. We do claim that the hearts of children may be brought under the control of the Spirit of God. We do claim that they may be under submission to the Savior's will. All this can be easier done in childhood than at any other period of life. Started aright on the King's highway, the way of holiness, there opens to the children the sweetest life a mortal can live,

the most useful life within the possibilities of a human soul, and a certainty of the final crowning in no other way to be secured.

2. Preparation.—We have seen that children should not be hurried into the Church upon some real or fancied experience received, or some spiritual impulses set on foot by revival influences. Nevertheless, nothing that looks in the direction of righteousness should ever be discouraged. Neither should it be considered other than a beginning more or less valuable. "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little," is the law of the evolution of childhood religion. This makes the true difference between teaching and training, between knowledge and character. So at the threshold of the Church is a good place to wait awhile and let the children look on all sides of the question of living an active Christian life—not to intimidate, nor yet to discourage, but to teach them to take the step intelligently. If, as a consequence,

some decide to go no further, we may rest assured that many more would go back if they were hurried on thoughtlessly. And we may be certain, also, that those who go on will possess a character which will fit them for the highest usefulness.

This preparation should be mainly, though not necessarily all, under the eye of the pastor. It will be well for him to have them together, and alone with himself occasionally. The way of consecration, faith, and confession, those three steps that constitute walking with God, should not only be carefully explained, but faithfully insisted upon. Certain formulæ of faith and relations of Church-membership should be committed to memory. They should be schooled in the "form of sound words," not to make them narrow and bigoted, but to make their religion properly understood, and their conversation such as will minister grace and truth. If the Church does not prescribe a time for this preparation, it is safe to say not less

than three months should be used. This is little enough. The children will prize their Church the more for the labor and study given to secure its full privileges.

3. Reception.—The ritualistic Churches make much of confirmation, an act equivalent to receiving into the Church. They are generally prepared beforehand, and then received together in classes. Great interest is thrown into the occasion. It is intended, and the plan wisely secures the result, that this shall be a date period in the history of their lives. As a fact they never forget it. The act answering to confirmation, called "barmitzvuth" among the Jews, is an event of similar importance. This is almost invariably celebrated at the age of thirteen. Who can know what effect these ceremonies may have upon the religious convictions of a life-time? Having guarded the children against formality as a substitute for spiritual life, why may we not give them the benefit—such as it is—of a day of much interest when

the time comes that they are to assume the vows of Church membership? The following advice is the result of years of experience in receiving children into the Church:

(1) Let children be received by themselves, never with adults. This enables the pastor to adjust the ceremony to their character and capacity. If a form is required by the Church, of course that form should be used. But it is easy to interject questions and remarks such as will make the ceremony more impressive.

(2) Let a whole service be given to the occasion. The children should sit together. The sermon should be especially prepared for them. The congregation should be made to feel that it is "children's-day," indeed the writer has often made it a part of the exercises of Children's-day, so instituted by the Church. It is not desirable that they should be dressed in a uniform manner. That might work a hardship to some. Let them come as they come to Sunday-school or Church.

(3) When the "right hand of fellowship" is extended to them, the Sunday-school superintendent, the Sunday-school teachers of any that are received, and the leaders of classes who have aided in the instruction of these children, should be invited forward, and, following the pastor, should give the same token of fellowship. Thus the children will be made to feel that they are heartily welcomed to their religious home.

(4) Let a souvenir of the event be given each one received. A neat certificate of reception, a valuable little book, valuable for its contents, or both these, are very appropriate. Whatever expense is involved in such a gift the Church can well afford to bear. Not only will such a process favorably impress the children, but it will disarm criticism on the part of those unfavorable to the reception of children into the Church.

Chapter VII.

METHODIST DISCIPLINE.

Hitherto we have only considered the general aspects of this subject. The writer has hoped that his little enterprise might be of service to ministers and members of all denominations of Christians. Surely there is great need of more being said than has yet been spoken or written on the great subject of what we owe the children in regard to training them for God and his Church. Still it was the intention at the outset to make this of especial value to Methodist ministers, parents, and teachers. The writer is a Methodist preacher; has been for forty-five years. For thirty-seven years of that time he has been pastor of Churches in that denomination. For this reason, perhaps, he is best suited to speak to those of his own

communion. There is much on this subject peculiar to Methodism. There is much that can not be questioned as very excellent. There is, however, very much that is being neglected. For these reasons the writer has thought it best to devote one chapter to the Methodist Discipline. Nor is it unlikely that brethren of other denominations may find food for thought, and thought for action, in studying what has been the united wisdom of one of the largest Churches of Protestants in America, and indeed elsewhere, in regard to the religious training of children.

Methodism began as a revival within the Church. As its first efforts were directed toward the reform of the masses—mainly the "submerged" masses—it was but natural that the children were for a time overlooked. This work was left to the State Church. It ought to have received earlier attention among Methodists in America, and yet legislation soon began after the organization of the Church in

1784-5. It would be foreign to the purpose of the present work to trace the history of this legislation down to the present time. It must suffice that we examine the Discipline as it is.

SECTION I.—THE DOCTRINE CONCERNING BAPTISM.

In the article of religion concerning baptism we are told that "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of children is to be retained in the Church." There is in this no reason given why children are baptized. It can not be that it is because baptism regenerates, because that has ever been a teaching vigorously repudiated by this Church. Nor is it because children are regenerate as they come into the world, for while that has been maintained by some, it has never been a doctrine of the Church. But we find the reason elsewhere

clearly and carefully stated. It is as follows: "We hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and therefore graciously entitled to baptism." Observe, the Church does not declare to what extent, if to any, the unconditional benefits of the atonement may operate in securing moral or spiritual change in the character of childhood previous to the exercise of faith. It is enough that they are the children of God—or members of his kingdom. This gives them a visible place in the Church, which is God's kingdom on earth. This statement may be changed by a majority vote of the General Conference, yet it has remained for many years, not only unchanged, but really unchallenged. It is improbable that any minister in the Church would wish to have it changed in any manner.

Still no rule of the Church requires parents to baptize their children. As a matter of fact there are those in the Church who not only re-

fuse to bring their children to baptism, but do not believe in the baptism of children previous to the exercise of their faith in Christ. While this liberty is very proper on a subject so much discussed by the Church for ages, and about which the very best of men have differed, it must not be supposed that the Methodist body, as such, is indifferent about it. It thoroughly believes that it is the duty of parents to bring their children to baptism, and requires its pastors that they shall "diligently instruct and exhort all parents to dedicate their children to the Lord in baptism as early as convenient." It is evident that a man can not become a minister of this Church, and be consistent, unless he believes that the children have a right to receive the token of the covenant by which they are sealed as the children of God. He certainly would not be accepted by the Church as a minister of Jesus Christ unless he was willing to baptize children, whatever might be his personal predilections.

SECTION II.—THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

Nothing could show more explicitly that the Methodist Episcopal Church considers children that are baptized as in some sense members of the body, than the fact that they are so classified in the Discipline. In the chapter on membership we find three classes indicated. Probationers, full members, and baptized children. The first is what we might call candidates for membership, yet they are more than mere candidates. A probationer is a member of the Church so far as the means of grace are concerned. All these, including the holy communion, he is not only permitted to participate in, but he is expected to do so. Failing to attend to these duties will be a barrier to his reception into full connection. The point where the probationer is limited in his membership is, that he can hold no office involving authority in the government of the Church, nor can he demand a trial for any fancied or real violation of Church rule.

He can be discontinued at any time without ceremony, if his life is not satisfactory to the Church.

Strictly speaking, baptized children are not probationers of the Church. It is nowhere said that they are. It is nowhere said that they shall participate in the holy communion. It is nowhere said that they shall not. Administrators of Church discipline may follow different rules, and yet remain well within the letter of the law on this subject. The writer has followed the following rule: If children come to the table, he gives them the elements. To refuse would be possibly a great harm to some innocent child who came with more judgment than we might think possible. Yet he is thoroughly convinced that they should be taught to stay away from the table until received into full connection, or until they have reached an age where they should be received by probation. Let communion with the Church be held before them as an advantage contingent on their learning the les-

sons of the Church and being received into full connection. What, then, are the advantages of the children who are baptized? Leaving out for the present their right to the instruction of the Church, a subject to be considered further on, we submit the following points:

1. They have the rights of probationers in reference to reception into full connection. It is not necessary to receive baptized children into the Church on probation. Their baptized relation—why not, for convenience, call it ward membership?—entitles them to this privilege. The law is in the words following: "Whenever baptized children shall understand the obligations of religion, and shall give evidence of piety, they may be admitted into full membership in the Church, on the recommendation of a leader with whom they have met at least six months in class, upon publicly assenting before the Church to the baptismal covenant, and also to the usual questions on doctrines and discipline."

2. Their relation to the Church does not end when the Church becomes dissatisfied with their moral and spiritual conduct. This is the case with probationers, but not with ward members. However they may live, while they are children they remain ward members. As such, the Church should still care for them, pray for them, labor with them, and seek by all possible means to bring them into responsible membership. This claim of baptized children is announced in the most legal form in the following words: "The pastor shall make an accurate register of the names of all the baptized children within his pastoral care, giving the dates of their birth and baptism, the names of their parents, and the places of their residence. And he shall give a certificate of such registration to the parents of all such children removing from his charge, which certificate shall transfer the relation of such children to the charge to which they are removed."

3. This ward membership also constitutes

a claim upon the Church in case of the death of parents. The Church assumes the responsibility of the religious training of every child received into its fold by baptism. The death of the parents augments, rather than diminishes, this responsibility. This is indicated in the following law of the Church: "Whenever a baptized child shall, by orphanage or otherwise, become deprived of Christian guardianship, the pastor shall ascertain and report to the leaders and stewards' meeting the facts in the case, and such provision shall be made for the Christian training of the child as the circumstances of the case admit and require."

SECTION III.—THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

It is unnecessary to say anything of the disciplinary regulations in regard to Sunday-schools. These are substantially the same in all Churches, and have been treated sufficiently elsewhere. Here it is proposed to consider

those rules and regulations of the Church by which the education and training of children have been anticipated by measures peculiar to this branch of Methodism. These have been distributed among different responsible parties, and shall be described in their order.

1. Parental Care.—The Church guards the practice of infant baptism in the following words: "As infant baptism contemplates a course of religious instruction and discipline, it is expected of all parents or guardians who present their children for baptism that they will use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God, and they should be solemnly admonished of this obligation, and earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein." In accordance with this idea the baptismal ritual contains the following pledge, required of the parents or guardians of all who bring their children to be baptized: "Dearly beloved, forasmuch as this child is now presented by you for Christian baptism, you must remember that it

is your part and duty to see that he be taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, the nature and end of this holy sacrament. And that he may know these things the better, you shall call upon him to give reverent attendance upon the appointed means of grace, such as the ministry of the Word, and the public and private worship of God, and further, you shall provide that he shall read the Holy Scriptures, and learn the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Cathechism, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health, in order that he may be brought up to lead a virtuous and holy life, remembering always that baptism doth represent unto us that inward purity which disposeth us to follow the example of our Savior Christ, that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die unto sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness. Do you therefore

solemnly engage to fulfill these duties, so far as in you lies, the Lord being your helper?"

Thus we see that this Church allows no sponsors in the case of baptism except the parents or guardians. If these can not be trusted for this great work, it would be in vain to intrust it to others.

2. Pastoral Care.—When à minister is received into full connection with an Annual Conference, he is required to give an affirmative answer to the followng question, asked in the most solemn and impressive manner, "Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?" The words "in every place," have reference to the itinerant character of this ministry. An ordinary life work in this way would involve many different Churches in every pastor's experience, and he is expected to do this in every one of them. This suggests a difficulty too often witnessed. One man goes to a charge and sets the machinery of the Church, in reference to the instruction of children, in full force

and in working order. The children are cared for, and the work among them prospers. He is removed, and another follows him. His successor neglects this work, things go wrong with the children, and the outcome discourages the Church from undertaking a similar enterprise. The injury is very great, and sometimes attends the ministry of very popular men. It is therefore of unspeakable importance that all ministers of this Church "mind everything great and small in Methodist discipline." By this process only can there be a consistent progress expected.

As having a general bearing on this subject, let the following words of discipline, from the very pen of John Wesley, be carefully considered: "Go into every house in course, and teach every one therein, young and old, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly; make every particular plain to their understandings; fix it in their minds; write it on their hearts. In order to this, there must be precept upon pre-

cept, line upon line. What patience, what love, what knowledge is requisite for this! We must needs do this, were it only to avoid idleness. Do we not loiter away many hours in every week? Each try himself; no idleness is consistent with a growth in grace. Nay, without exactness in redeeming time you can not retain the grace you receive in justification." Can anything be more wise, or more to the point? If the ministry should catch the inspiration of these words, that fact would revolutionize the spirit and growth of the Church.

3. Class Instruction.—The Church, as such, has assumed a great responsibility in the baptism of children. It has most carefully guarded any mistake in regard to what is meant by this act. That can be well seen by the following words: "Infant baptism contemplates a course of religious instruction and discipline," and for that reason, "it is expected of all parents and guardians who present their children for baptism that they will use all diligence in bringing

them up in conformity to the Word of God; and they should be solemnly admonished of this obligation, and earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein." Not only is the ministry to urge this duty upon parents, but each pastor is required to add to their efficiency, or make up their lack of service, as the case may be, by organizing classes for this purpose. "The pastor shall organize the baptized children of the Church, when they have reached the age of ten years, or at an earlier age when it is deemed advisable, into classes, and appoint suitable leaders (male or female), whose duty it shall be to meet them in class once a week, and instruct them in the nature, design, and obligations of baptism, and in the truths of religion necessary to make them wise unto salvation; to urge them to give regular attendance upon the means of grace; to advise, exhort, and encourage them to an immediate consecration of their hearts and lives to God, and to inquire into the state of their religious experience; provided that unbap-

tized children shall not be excluded from these classes."

4. Supervision.—Methodism is episcopal in its economy. This does not mean merely that it has bishops. Indeed some forms of Methodism have none. The word here means oversight. It means such a watchcare over each other as will best provoke to love and good works. Every officer in Methodism reports. He gives an account to somebody, and that somebody is charged with the duty of helping, warning, or encouraging as the need may be. Leaders of children's classes, indeed leaders of all classes, are required to report once in three months to the Quarterly Conference. Thus this body, supposed to supervise all the affairs of the Church, both temporal and spiritual, is, or ought to be, constantly posted in regard to the work of instruction among the children. This also gives the presiding elder an opportunity of judging to what extent the rules of the Church on this subject are being observed. The pastor re-

ports each quarter as to the state of the Sunday-schools within his charge, and also to what extent he has preached to and catechised the children during the quarter.

At the session of every Quarterly Conference, which means that four times a year the subject must be brought before the officiary of the Church, the question is asked, "Have the rules respecting the instruction of children been observed?" In order that there may be no mistake about the matter, the paragraphs are noted which involve the following points: The formation of Sunday-schools wherever "ten persons can be collected for that purpose." The pastor is expected to engage "as many of our members as" possible in this work. He is required to preach on the subject of Sunday-schools and the religious training of children in "each congregation at least once in six months." He is required to form classes for the instruction of children, and to appoint suitable leaders for them, though of course he may

lead them himself. The remaining duties of the pastor concerning which this question is asked shall be given in the very words of Discipline: "It shall be the duty of our ministers to enforce faithfully upon parents and Sunday-school teachers the importance of instructing children in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion; to see that our catechisms be used as extensively as possible in our Sunday-schools and families; and to preach to and catechise them publicly in the Sunday-schools and at public meetings appointed for that purpose. It shall be the duty of every minister in his pastoral visits to pay special attention to the children; to speak to them personally and kindly on the subject of experimental and practical godliness, according to their capacity; to pray earnestly for them; and diligently instruct and exhort all parents to dedicate their children to the Lord in baptism as early as convenient."

That these most excellent rules are very poorly kept must be conceded. That some pas-

tors scarcely make an attempt to do what they so solemnly promised in the beginning of their work, must also be sadly confessed. That much of this laxity might be removed by a simple device which seems to have been prepared for this very purpose, can not be questioned. That device is found in the duties of a presiding elder. They are found in these words: "To carefully inquire at each Quarterly Conference whether the rules respecting the instruction of children have been faithfully observed; and to report to the Annual Conference the names of all pastors within his district who have not observed these rules." And that the presiding elder may know what these rules are, the paragraphs already cited are given by number. Certainly the duty is plain and clear, yet in all the Annual Conferences the writer has attended, numbering no less than forty-three, he never heard a presiding elder report a preacher deficient in this respect. He once heard a bishop, then many years in that work, say substantially the same thing. It

seems that the very key to the situation is never used. A wonderful power is thus placed in the hands of a presiding elder to secure an honest and faithful execution of law on this subject. It will not do to say that they do not know who are delinquent, for the Church has placed in their hands the very means needed in order that they may know. They are remiss in duty if they do not know. The writer had experience as a presiding elder for four years, then the period of limitation on any district, and proposes to tell his experience in true Methodistic fashion.

At each place I asked if the rules respecting the instruction of children had been observed. At each place, without a single exception, the question was promptly answered in the affirmative. I then asked the members present to hear what those rules were, and read them through very carefully. The question was then asked again, and with not more than two exceptions, on a large district, the question was as

promptly answered in the negative. But these affirmations increased at every round made, until more than half of the charges were working our rules. At one place a pastor met me at the train, and soon as the usual greetings were over, said: "I owe you an apology. I did not like the pushing way you went to work on the subject of the instruction of children, and I said to some of the brethren that Brother A. had children on the brain." By the way, that is a pretty good thing to have on the brain, and better yet, to have on the heart. "But," this brother continued, "since you were last here I have organized a children's class, and finding no one that I could safely intrust to do the work, I have led it myself. And I must say it is the sweetest and most promising work I ever did in my ministry. I have missed much in not attending to this duty before."

At the end of the year there were several ministers who had not wheeled into line on this subject, and the question naturally arose how

they should be treated. My relations with all the ministers on the district had been of the most pleasant character. To report them in open Conference as having neglected one of the most important duties belonging to their office was very offensive to me, and would no doubt be equally so to them. Besides one hates to lead off in a custom that has long been winked at, as though he alone were the only immaculate soul that had filled that office. A happy thought struck me. I could, in connection with my report, name those charges where the rules respecting the instruction of children had been observed. In this case I need not name any man, and any way, it is always easier to speak of those who have done their duty than to speak of those who have neglected it. This was done. The bishop presiding saw the device, and took note of those places, and when the names of the ministers were called whose charges had been reported as having carried out the rules, he asked them to give a brief statement of their

experience on that point. This was a great help in awakening an interest in the work. Before the term was closed not a charge on the district could be found where efforts were not made to carry out these rules, though in some mining regions among the mountains little could be done from the difficulties involved. No one has followed my example on that district, or anywhere else so far as I know; but the impression is firmly fixed in my mind that if the law was made to require the presiding elders to report those ministers who did their duty, or to report the places where the duty was being done, much more might be accomplished in the religious training of children.

SECTION IV.—METHODIST RITUAL OF RECEPTION.

The Methodist Episcopal Church provides a ritual for the reception of members in full connection. The writer would not advise any serious infringement of this, or any other ritual prescribed in the Discipline. The form for

adults is all that could be well desired. Still in the reception of children the writer has varied the form, not by leaving anything out, but by adding thereto what makes it better adapted to the needs of children. As this has been used for several years, and invariably commended, in one instance most heartily by a bishop who witnessed it, the writer ventures to submit the plan in this place:

When the day arrives let the children be placed in front of the pulpit by themselves. A brief sermon is preached to them more especially, on some theme appropriate to the occasion. At the close of the sermon the children are called forward, and take their places in the order called. This enables the pastor to present the souvenirs without there having to be any changes made afterward. The general addresses are then read up to and including the first question, which is as follows: "Do you here in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise contained in the

baptismal covenant, ratifying and confirming the same, and acknowledging yourselves bound faithfully to keep that covenant?"

Instead of answering "I do," as in the case of adults, the children are taught to repeat in concert the entire baptismal covenant. The question is then asked, "Have you saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?" This they answer as usual, "I trust I have." The question is then asked, "What is saving faith?" They answer in concert, "Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and living to please him." This answer will stand the test of any man's experience.

"Do you believe in the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church?" They answer as usual. No doubt many so answer who never read those articles, nor ever heard them read. In this case the children have heard them read, and also carefully explained. It is a solemn farce to ask it under other circumstances.

But the children should know more about the doctrines of the Church than this. The Articles of Religion are not specifically Methodistic. The ten doctrines of grace, as found in the Catechism No. 1, are, and the children have committed these to memory. These are called out by the pastor, and repeated one by one, in answer to his question, "What is the first?" and so on to the end. When those doctrines are reached which are technically explained, the pastor says, after the doctrine has been repeated, "What is this doctrine for?" They answer in the words included in parentheses appended to the statements of these doctrines respectively. The next question, "Will you be cheerfully governed by the rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, hold sacred the ordinances of God, and endeavor, as much as in you lies, to promote the welfare of your brethren and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom?" is answered as in the Ritual; but add here the questions of the Catechism

pertaining to the Church, and part, if not all, of the ten points of Church economy as found in the last pages of the Catechism No. 1.

No change is made in the last question, nor in the challenge that follows. But when the right hand of fellowship is about to be given, let the congregation arise. As a token of respect for the most solemn part of the Ritual, this should always be done, not only for children, but also for adults. The superintendent of the Sunday-school, the teachers of such scholars as are being received, and leaders of children's classes that have helped in preparing the children for this occasion, all go forward, and, following the pastor, each gives the right hand to the children. The congregation will then be seated, the souvenirs will be presented, and the children will take their seats.

In some such way the reception of children in full connection may be made an occasion that will never be forgotten by them. One caution is perhaps necessary, though often indicated be-

fore. The preparation for such an event should not be for the event itself, or there will be great danger of merely learning words, with but little of substantial gain in real knowledge and discipline. If the choice were to lie between learning the words, or getting the ideas into the mind by careful explanation, the latter would be better than the former. Better understand without memorizing, than to memorize without understanding. Still we are apt to underestimate the worth of committing valuable words to memory. There is no need of losing either advantage. The children are at an age to learn; they have, or ought to have, time to learn; let them learn well what will be of such vast importance to them.

Chapter VIII.

POSSIBILITIES.

The babe lies in its mother's arms, and is folded lovingly to her bosom. It will be a babe but for a short time. How many and rapid the changes from babyhood to senility! If that babe shall not give up its young life soon to the certainties of an eternal home, it will be in possession of a will of its own. It will soon begin to think for itself. The time is short to independence before God and the law. It will be a man or woman with all the words mean. And of what sort? It will be like some of those around us. Can a parent be indifferent to the question, "To which of those around us?" The most reasonable answer will be, that, unless special means are employed to prevent it, it will be like the majority. Carefulness may make it

better. Carelessness may leave it worse. Indifference will make about the average. Is that your ambition in regard to your child? We will not say that the majority are failures; this might be too dark a picture properly to represent the truth. But failures are very many, and so must color much the picture whether we will or no. Is it strange that the thought should come into your mind that your babe, should he live, may be a failure too? It would be more strange if the thought did not come there. Do you shrink from it as too horrible to look upon? Thank your God that the possibility may be very remote; so remote that it need not give much anxiety. There is a way in which the very thought may prevent the result you fear. Agencies are within your reach. Influences are within your control. If only taken in time, if only wise enough in the use of means, you may be quite certain that your darling will be a success. Weigh the difficulties well. Count the cost. See the danger. See also what means are

necessary to secure safety and triumph. Then set yourself at the work God has given you, resting upon his power and help. There is absolutely no other way. If disposed to be careless, let the fact be well considered, a fact so common among those around you; that few babes ever realize the expectations of their parents. Few boys and girls ever realize their own. Parents, when their own childish dreams have fled, begin to indulge in others for their children. How often their aching hearts have come to know that these too were vain?

We foolishly talk to our children of being one day Presidents or members of Congress, statesmen or scholars of high repute. They may attain any of these coveted positions, and yet come far short of true happiness, or, in any proper sense of the word, achieving success. Sorrow sits in splendor sometimes just as certainly as it sits in obscurity. Aching hearts are often found in palaces, happy hearts in humble homes. But why picture such high things

for our children? Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand will never be known beyond the hamlet where they live and die. Their name, the day of their birth, and the day of their death is a sufficient epitaph. Even this the passing world will never stop to read longer than one generation. If great hope in this world is the only basis for their character, the great mass of them will have nothing at all on which to build when the dreams of youth have vanished.

It is a common thing for Legislatures and teachers to talk as though mental training was all the Nation needs in order to secure the highest prosperity. Let it be granted that intelligence is all the Nation can safely give its citizens, it by no means follows that that is all they need. The Church has a work to do for them that rises as much above mere intelligence as heaven rises above the earth. Graduates of colleges sometimes go down very quick into drunkard's graves. Scientific education some-

times helps the Nihilist to do his most deadly work. Knowledge is power. How often the saying is quoted? It is true, it is power, but nothing more. Power rightly directed calls for the help of God, and God will help through his Church. Lift up your eyes and behold an army of tramps. Go down to the prisons and see the ever-increasing class of those who are making property and life insecure. Go to the asylums, overcrowded and multiplying, and estimate the expense of charity, to a large extent applied at the wrong end of life. Each person you see, however total his failure, started out to live in this world pure and innocent as that child which now is so lovingly caressed by its fond mother. God's grace alone can keep these little ones from such awful consequences of sin. Who can afford to spare any pains to save a child from such a fate?

Take another view of the case. We sometimes talk of brutish men. But no man can ever become a brute or beast. To compare a

bad man to a beast is to do an injustice to the beast. The brute does the best he knows how. Let all men do as well, and this world would become a paradise. As you look on the face of a child remember, if it live it must become a saint or a sinner. It must become a curse to itself, to its race, a pollution to the earth, or it must become a blessing, an ornament to society, a benediction to the world. When Lewis and Clark crossed the continent early in the nineteenth century, they found on a high mountain a rill running from beneath the rocks. One of the party put one foot on each side of it, and rejoiced that he had seen the day when he could bestride the Missouri River. It was indeed the fountain-head of that stream. Farther down it could carry the commerce of the world on its bosom. Over a slight elevation, not far from that place, they found another stream of similar character. That was the beginning of one of the largest tributaries of the majestic Columbia, pouring its vast body of water into the Pacific

Ocean. A little time and care would turn either of these streams into the other direction. But to do that, time had to be taken at once. Neglected but for a brief period, and all the skill of modern engineering could not prevent them from reaching the destiny for which they had started. A scientific man has recently written a book on "The Psychology of Religion." In it he says: "Conversion does not occur with the same frequency at all periods in life. It belongs almost exclusively to the years between ten and twenty-five. The number of instances outside that range appear few and scattered. That is, conversion is a distinctly adolescent phenomenon. It is a singular fact, also, that within this period the conversions do not distribute themselves equally among the years. In the rough we may say they begin to occur at seven or eight years, and increase in number gradually to ten or eleven, and then rapidly to sixteen; rapidly decline to twenty, and gradually fall away after that, and become rare after

thirty. One may say that if conversion has not occurred before twenty, the chances are small that it will ever be experienced." He obtained the data for these conclusions from living examples reported to him in answer to a large number of circulars sent out. It is presumable that he sent his circulars to prominent examples of Christian men and women. No wonder he concluded that few conversions occurred after the age of thirty, for those so converted would hardly be of sufficient prominence in the Christian Church to receive a circular. Still he is right in stating that the probability of conversion decreases with each year after fifteen or sixteen. We have already seen the reason. Is it not also true that few conversions occur before the age of ten simply because those who have charge of childhood training do not believe in the value of early conversion, even if they believe them possible? In any case, these facts ought to startle the whole Church into renewed activity in securing the conversion of children.

Except in the case of idiots, every child that grows up to manhood must become a sinner or saint. But there is a more terrible fact to be stated. The child that grows up must become an angel or devil. It must rejoice forever in the paradise of God, or reach an end, we know not what. Only the dark and fearful words of the loving Son of God lead us certainly to conclude that it were better that such had never been born. With these possibilities before us, can we leave the children solely to a godless school, and perhaps an infidel teacher for their education? Can we leave the children to the influences of wicked children and wicked men for their ideas of morality? Can we leave the children to some chance lecturer or newspaper penny-a-liner for their ideas of religion? Let us be quick to answer, for time flies, and these little ones are rapidly setting toward one ocean or the other, and soon they will be out of our reach. Let us be quick to obey the Savior's command, "Feed my lambs."

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